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ABSTRACT

This volume contains a comprehensive review and analysis of existing Australian research on early school leaving behavior, focusing on girls. Part One gives an overview of school leavers, and data on general trends are considered. Observable trends in school leaving statistics are examined from antecedents through the school leaving decision to the consequences of dropping out. Part Two consists of four chapters which review national and regional studies of school leaving and early school leaving. The final section presents a summary of findings and offers a number of major recommendations. In addition, a postscript provides information on important studies which are still in progress and data which were not available for inclusion in this review. This report highlights the significance of the female early leaver syndrome as a national concern and identifies its relationship to deep-rooted social perceptions. (Author/NRB)

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School Leavers in Australia

A comprehensive review and analysis
of existing Australian research on early school leavers
with particular emphasis on early female leavers

by Professor Millicent Poole

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SCHOOL LEAVERS IN AUSTRALIA

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF
EXISTING AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH ON EARLY
SCHOOL LEAVERS WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS
ON EARLY FEMALE LEAVERS

A study undertaken by
Professor Millicent Poole
for the Schools Commission.

December 1978

ED-79/WS/51

PREFACE

Despite the progress made over the last few decades, equality of educational opportunity between girls and boys is still far from being a reality. In most instances boys still have in fact, a clear advantage over girls in terms of school enrolment ratios.

Many countries are taking steps to solve the problem and restore the balance. But in the process, a number of ministry of education officials have become aware of another problem, namely educational wastage, which is often far greater among girls than boys. Efforts should therefore clearly be directed simultaneously at improving the enrolment ratio and at reducing educational wastage among girls if young people of both sexes are to enjoy equal education opportunities.

It was for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the causes of educational wastage among schoolgirls, and helping to solve the problem that Unesco launched a vast three-part programme in 1977-1978:

- Part 1. An international survey on the basis of a questionnaire sent out to all Member States of Unesco.
- Part 2. A series of country studies conducted by national teams.
- Part 3. A programme for the exchange of information and experience, providing the opportunity for specialists from a number of countries to make study visits to various countries to discuss the strategies and means of overcoming the problem.

This study on educational wastage among schoolgirls in Australia comes under the second part of our programme. It was carried out by Professor Millicent Poole in collaboration with the Schools Commission of Australia.

The other four studies in the same series have been carried out by the People's Republic of Benin, the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, the United Mexican States and the Syrian Arab Republic. Each of the five studies will be published separately, in English, Spanish or French, according to the language in which the report was written.

The authors of each national study are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts analysed and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of Unesco and do not commit the Organization. Furthermore Unesco wishes to point out that the designations employed and the presentation of material do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Unesco concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The international study, part 1, will be published in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

FOREWORD

Early in 1978 Australia was invited by UNESCO to be one of five countries to undertake a series of case studies on "drop out among school-aged girls".

The Schools Commission responded to this invitation by proposing that it would undertake a comprehensive review and analysis of existing Australian research on early school leaving behaviour, focussing on girls. This proposal, which entailed a Commission supplement to the original UNESCO grant, was accepted by UNESCO.

Professor Millicent Poole, from the School of Education at Macquarie University, was asked by the Commission to undertake the review, the report of which is contained in this document. As noted in the preface, however, Professor Poole, in the course of completing the task for the Commission, felt that additional material relating to the antecedents and consequences of school leaving behaviour should also be explored. It was not possible to complete and edit the additional material for this document which had to meet a UNESCO deadline. At a later stage, a revised and further edited publication incorporating that material, the outline of which is given in Appendix A, may be possible. Pam Cahir of the Schools Commission has been responsible for editing the material to the present stage.

Ken McKinnon

K. R. MCKINNON

Chairman

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INTRODUCTION

This project, commissioned by UNESCO and the Australian Schools Commission, was to undertake a comprehensive review and analysis of Australian studies on female school leavers, with an emphasis on the problem of early leaving. That is, the project was directed to provide insights into and possible answers to the question:

Do females tend to leave school earlier than males (if so, for what reasons), and what are the consequences for them of deciding not to complete the full range of secondary schooling?

This question was supplemented by a further one:

What are the relative prospects and opportunities facing female leavers, as compared with males, who do complete the full range of secondary schooling?

The first phase of the project began in June, 1978 with the development of a strategy that led to the appointment of a research assistant in each of the six States, for a limited period, and one for a longer term in the Australian Capital Territory. These assistants were engaged to carry out a literature search to identify relevant studies, both completed and in progress. This part of the project extended for a period of eight weeks from early July and was followed by the analysis and writing phase. Despite the obvious time constraints, the efficiency of the data gathering produced a comprehensive picture of the status of research in Australia into the focus questions. It is important to note that at the commencement of the project, all concerned were of the view that little systematic work had been done in Australia on the early leaving question, in general, or on female leavers, in particular. This perception was quite erroneous. In the event, the data gathering network found an extensive range of Australian studies related to school leaving and what was seen initially as a relatively small endeavour quickly grew into an extremely large one. This unpredicted situation meant that extreme time pressures were imposed on the writing phase as, for a variety of reasons, the project as a whole could not be extended. It also meant that an earlier plan to conduct a comparison between Australian and overseas studies had to be deferred and the review became a purely national one.

In exploring the background and implications of the focus question(s), it was obvious that they were not simply educational in nature but, rather, were intimately interwoven with social, cultural, economic and even political issues. Early school leaving, then, was seen as a phenomenon that could not be analysed only in terms of statistics. Its full significance could be gauged only by considering its causes and effects - that is, the antecedents and consequences of the decision to leave school (either early or on completion) were seen as providing extremely valuable perspectives on the questions.

An examination of the sequence:

ANTECEDENTS SCHOOL LEAVING DECISION CONSEQUENCES,
will demonstrate the full significance of observable trends in
school leaving statistics.

Initially data on general trends are considered, this is then followed by a review of national and regional studies of school leaving and early school leaving. A number of major recommendations are presented in the final part of the Report. In addition, a Postscript provides information on a number of important studies which are still in progress and data from which were not available for inclusion in this review.

The Report clearly highlights the significance of the female early leaver syndrome as a national concern and shows that it is related to deep-rooted social perceptions that are being modified too slowly to accommodate intense and rapidly changing social, cultural and economic pressures. UNESCO and the Schools Commission are to be commended for initiating this review at a time when it might contribute significantly to increasing awareness of the problems of school leavers generally, and lead to an alleviation of the difficulties facing female early leavers in Australia.

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PART I

SCHOOL LEAVERS IN AUSTRALIA:
AN OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 1

SCHOOL LEAVERS : YOUTH AT RISK

The Australian economy has failed increasingly in the last five years in its attempts to absorb all school leavers into the workforce. The resulting problem of youth unemployment is by no means unique to Australia. It is a condition which has beset most western industrial democracies. The Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) document, *Entry of Young People into Working Life*, for example, highlights the recency of the problem and its pervasiveness:

1. Up to five years ago, school leavers had no difficulty in finding a job in keeping with the level of their educational attainment. Apprenticeship, on-the-job experience, plus additional training made it possible for them to improve their occupational qualifications after their schooldays were over. The requirements of an expanding economy opened up promotion and career development prospects to the most gifted and highly motivated among them.
2. Today these traditional means of ensuring a steady flow of new entrants into the various occupations seem to be disorganised. Despite the efforts made in the educational field most of the industrialised countries are concerned about the problem of youth, and, in particular, its entry into a working life. (*Entry of Young People into Working Life* 1977)¹

The acknowledgement in the OECD paper that the problem is linked to industrial economies rather than to deficiencies in the educational system is important. The current ethos in Australia is largely one of blaming the quality of schooling and the calibre of leavers themselves. For example, Blakers (1978)² cites comments appearing in the media which reflect this mood:

The Federal Minister for Education, Senator Carrick, said yesterday that he was deeply troubled by the growing numbers of young people who lacked motivation and were 'turning off' from education.

They were going out into the world incapable of handling the simplest approaches to seeking jobs, even the ability to make a telephone call or write out an application. The hard questions now being asked indicated that the educational system was seen by the community as inadequate for the '70s and the '80s. (Carrick, 1977: Address to the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science [ANZAAS]. Reported in *The Australian*. Cited in Blakers 1978).³

Many employers were hiring married women and older workers in

preference to school leavers because they had higher academic standards ... Most school leavers faced an 'environment shock' in the move from school to work because they were psychologically unprepared for employment. Many therefore felt they were unable to cope with work and dropped out ...

... education planners had become obsessed with the thought that they had to produce a flexible person that fitted into a fast-changing world. They had forgotten the need to produce a person with skills and attitudes that made him at least employable in the first place. (Spicer 1977: *The Australian*, cited in Blakers 1978) ⁴

This school and leaver-blaming is in marked contrast to the 1960s. During that period of industrial expansion there was a quest for talent. School leavers were encouraged to pursue post-secondary education. Any early leaving or attrition from tertiary institutions was conceived of as wastage of human potential and human resources. The 1960s witnessed an unparalleled concentration of energy and resources, not merely on gifted students, but on the educational needs of disadvantaged youth. Education was promoted in Australia, and in industrialised democracies, as the means of creating the opportunity for the amelioration of social and economic inequality; the means of discovering outstanding intellectual talent in groups labelled 'disadvantaged', and the means of facilitating individual self-actualisation.

What, with hindsight, will be said of the 1970s? That it was the decade in which youth were asked to limit their aspirations and expectations? That it was the decade of disenchantment with education? That it was the decade in which the real discontinuities between school and work became apparent and were examined? Perhaps more stringent criticisms will be made: that while economic and educational breakdown were being posited as the causes of leaver unemployment, political and social solutions were not being explored.

To some, the current economic downturn is seen as temporary, to be reversed in time. To others, there is little prospect of much improvement. It is in this setting of economic uncertainty that school leavers are placed on the post-school tracks and left to fend largely for themselves. Some obtain work, which may or may not be satisfying; some pursue post-secondary education in the hope that it will lead to enhanced opportunities; some remain permanently unemployed.

The consequences of the non-employment of school leavers are profound, from both a personal and a societal perspective. The plight of school leavers must be seen in these terms and not merely in economic ones. The social consequences of structural unemployment must give cause for concern. The meaning of work is under scrutiny, no longer simply in terms of job satisfaction but in terms of the valuing of the 'work ethic' as such. If there is no work for school leavers, they begin to question not only the structure of work but also the function of schooling. If the instrumental function of schooling fails to prepare them for jobs, and if the economy cannot absorb them, whatever the quality of their education, there seems to be an insoluble impasse which places school leavers at even greater risk.

NUMBER OF LEAVERS

The number of secondary students staying on at school has increased in recent years. Between 1960 and 1969, the number of 16-year-olds still at school rose from 29 per cent to 51 per cent. This rise levelled in the early 1970s. There is some evidence to suggest that the proportion who stay on past the compulsory school leaving age has remained static or actually declined. The figures cited by Rosier (1978) ⁵ suggest that, Australia-wide, about half of the 16-year-olds remained at school, although there is variability among States. Data provided by Fitzgerald (1976) ⁶ suggest that more students are leaving school early and that two-thirds leave before the end of the final year without gaining a credential that will gain them entry to post-secondary education or to an increasing number of jobs which specify higher levels of educational attainment.

The analysis of the Australian situation by a federal panel on Transition from Secondary Education to Employment suggested that in the 1970s between 210,000 - 250,000 young people left secondary school each year. On average, about three-quarters of these, entered the workforce direct. The majority of the remainder entered full-time post-secondary education. For each year, between 1970 and 1974, some 150,000 - 190,000 school leavers entered the workforce direct from school. The panel saw these leaver statistics as a function of three major determinants:

...demographic factors which affect the numbers in the population of school age; the retention rate which affects the number of students who have attained minimum leaving age but continue at secondary school; and the proportion of secondary school leavers going on to a full-time, post-secondary education. (*Transition from Secondary Education to Employment* 1976). ⁷

For example, in terms of demographic trends, the 'school leaver age group' (15-19 year olds) was 1.2 million in 1975, an increase of approximately 100 per cent in twenty years, compared with a total population increase of some 66 per cent. Rising retention rates led to an increase in the average age of school leavers, a trend which was especially marked for female leavers (19 per cent females left at 17 years in 1970-71; 24 per cent in 1974-75). (*Transition from Secondary Education to Employment* 1976). ⁸

Another observed trend was that many potential school leavers had postponed their entry into the workforce, remaining at school in the hope that they would enhance their probability of employment. There are dangers in this increased retentivity, however, which in a time of economic recession, means that staying-on becomes a form of thinly disguised unemployment. In addition, the skills gained by staying on are not necessarily going to provide vocational preparation. An unintended consequence may be that employers seek leavers with higher credentials, using

schooling as a recruitment and screening mechanism. This disadvantages the early leaver and further underlines the discontinuities between extended schooling and the demands of the workforce.

LEAVERS MOST AT RISK

The studies of school leavers in Australia have generally not focussed on early school leavers. They have focussed on the entry of leavers to work or further education. There are, of course, statutory school leaving ages set by each State in Australia. To leave prior to that age requires special exemptions, not easily obtained. Technically such exemptions could be called 'early leaving'. The term 'early leavers' was used by Rosier (1978) ⁹ to describe students who decided to terminate their schooling at age 16. A definition of 'early leaver' can be more generally applied to 15 or 16-year-olds who do not complete their terminal year of schooling (at Year 12 or Form VI and age 17 to 18 years). There has been an absence of the term 'dropout' in Australian literature on school leaving. The only study located called 'Who are the Dropouts' referred to wastage in tertiary education (Davis, 1975).¹⁰ Why there is lack of concern with the 'dropout' phenomenon in Australia is not clear. Perhaps there is not the same intensity of concern with loss of individual talent as has developed in the United States.

It is the early leaver who is most often perceived as being at risk (for example Fitzgerald, 1976¹¹; Wright and Headlam, 1977 ¹²). Within this category, the female early leaver has been singled out as being most vulnerable (for example Blakers, 1978). ¹³ These two categories were not mentioned, however, by the Transition from Secondary Education to Employment panel as being particularly affected by unemployment. The groups they named as being most at risk were:

- . young people in non-metropolitan areas of Australia
- . Aborigines
- . migrants
- . the less educationally qualified, the low-skilled and the inexperienced. (*Transition from Secondary Education to Employment* 1976). ¹⁴

The problems of low self-esteem, reduced aspirations and opportunities, rejection of schooling, and lack of careers information are often seen as disadvantaging these groups in particular. Whether the early female leavers are especially at risk is examined throughout this report, using an analytical approach. The issues confronting early female leavers are not considered in isolation in this report, but rather within a general framework of school leaving in Australia. It is relatively easy to choose excerpts selectively from reports on leavers which suggest that early female leavers are at risk. The problem may be broader, however, for example are all female school leavers confronted with a set of circumstances which are different from those facing their male counterparts?

Is the issue of early female leaving merely a syndrome of the status and position of women in Australian society generally? Or is it that all early leavers, male or female, are at risk in times of unemployment and economic uncertainty?

It is within this broader framework of what happens to school leavers that a special focus on female leaving is developed. All students are school leavers at some stage of their lives. The decision to stay or leave is important, and one which critically affects the future options of youth. The antecedents of this decision-making process and its consequences have not, however, been fully examined in Australia.

Very recently, Rosier in his analysis of early school leavers in Australia wrote:

Relatively little work has been done in Australia to identify the important factors associated with the school termination decision, or to examine relationships between these factors. (Rosier. 1978).¹⁵

The analysis undertaken in the following chapters is, therefore, timely. Unfortunately, no empirical analysis of the multiplicity of likely influential factors has been possible. Rather, an overview and analysis of existing studies was attempted, together with some construction of the factors which differentially impinge on female leavers in Australia. Currently, a number of major research studies on school leavers are in progress, but could not be incorporated into the present review, (see Postscript). Such studies in progress do indicate, however, a growing concern in Australia with factors relating to school leaving and the transition from school to work or to post-secondary education.

Before analysing specific studies on school leavers, an analysis of general leaving statistics is undertaken to determine answers to basic questions such as: Do females leave school earlier than males? What age are students when they leave school? Are more students staying on to complete the terminal year of their schooling? What of the States in Australia, are there marked differences in their retention patterns for male and female students? These and other general leaver statistics provide a context in which to locate and evaluate the specific leaver studies which are reported.

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL LEAVER TRENDS

The patterns of school leaving in Australia - for males and females has been partially documented by the various State Departments of Education, and by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This enables a fairly systematic analysis of patterns of retention and leaving to be undertaken for both sexes. A comparative approach more clearly illustrates the parity or disparity operating for male and female school leavers - in relation to factors such as age of leaving (on reaching the minimum statutory leaving age or completing the final year of secondary schooling); time of leaving (whether more females leave during the year rather than at the end, thereby forfeiting course completion records); and state of origin (each State education department in Australia offers different educational provisions which may or may not cater equally to the needs of male and female leavers).

These aspects and others, are examined below to determine, in general terms, whether male and female school leavers in Australia appear to be participating equally in the State education systems. In addition, some reference is made to other dimensions beyond State provisions, which might impinge on school leaving decisions, that is type of schooling, socio-economic status, and cultural origin.

DEFINING PARTICIPATION, RETENTION AND LEAVING

The Australian statistics on participation, retention and leaving trends are generally derived from the Commonwealth Department of Education, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, State Government Directorates of Planning and Research Branches in State departments of education, although some are calculated by individual researchers. The two most frequently used measures of length of schooling are participation rates and retention rates. The first refers to the proportion of students in each age group who are still at school; the second signifies the percentage of the cohort entering secondary school which remains to a particular grade or Year, usually Year 12. *Girls, School and Society*, (1975)¹ refers to the difficulties involved in using both measures. For example, the proportion of an age group still at school is not an accurate measure of participation in formal education since many school leavers move directly into post-secondary education. Nor do participation rates give an accurate guide to the level of schooling completed. As for retention rates, these do not reflect the nature of attrition; for example the students appearing in final year secondary figures are rarely the identical group of students who entered secondary schools five or six years earlier. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that more males than females repeat the final year

of schooling. Despite their deficiencies, however, these measures are often the only comprehensive ones available to enable useful comparisons to be made between male and female students. Generally, such statistics do not provide the breakdowns necessary to probe differences in participation patterns across school systems that is among state systems, between the government and non-government sectors, or within regional areas (e.g. urban vs rural). These figures usually have to be calculated for specific studies although they have occurred in the research design of certain studies on leavers undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Estimates of school leaving vary according to the data sources used and the time scales involved in calculating leaving figures. In its most recent statistical monograph on School Leavers (1977), the Commonwealth Department of Education based its estimates on three sources:

- (a) a school census conducted in August every year by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS);
- (b) the supplement to the quarterly labour force survey (ABS);
- (c) unemployment registration - Commonwealth Employment Service (CES).

Yet, in 1974, 1975 and 1976 the estimation of leavers was calculated from January to May rather than yearly in August. This makes planned comparisons of leaving patterns difficult. At best, all figures cited are estimates and the ABS provide a Table of Standard Errors of Estimates for all its figures. Calculation of leaving figures in individual research studies is even more problematic, although peak leaving months have been identified in terms of transition to post-secondary schooling and job searches prior to major credentialling periods. Since various data sources are used in this report, figures may vary. In each instance, however, the source of statistics will be cited and, where possible, the basis of estimation of figures and their reliability will be included.

General Leaver Statistics

The general pattern of school leaving in Australia is associated with declared statutory school leaving ages which, historically, have varied from State to State. At the turn of the century, compulsory schooling was just being enforced in Queensland (1900) and did not appear in New South Wales until 1916. By the 1930s, however, compulsory schooling was well established but the age limits differed among States. New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania required compulsory attendance between the ages of seven and 14, while Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia favoured earlier enrolment at six years of age. The compulsory school leaving age was extended beyond 14 years in stages in New South Wales from 1941-1943. In 1946, the Tasmanian statutory school leaving age was declared as 16 years. It was not until the mid 1960's that the minimum school leaving age stood at 15 years in all States except Tasmania where it remained at 16 years. Even then, for a statutory

leaving age of 15, the retention rates varied between States, ranging from 63.3 per cent in Western Australia to 78.6 per cent in South Australia (See Table 2.1).

TABLE 2.1

RETENTION RATES OF 15 YEAR OLDS, AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION, ALL STATES, AUSTRALIA, 1966

State	Pupils enrolled at school 15 years of age	Total population 15 years of age	Retention rate as a percentage
New South Wales (NSW)	52,993	74,548	71.1
Victoria (Vic)	45,374	57,623	78.7
Queensland (Qld)	22,036	31,334	70.3
South Australia (SA)	16,401	20,859	78.6
Western Australia (WA)	10,549	16,674	63.3
Tasmania (Tas)	5,595	7,215	77.5

Source: Barrett, A: "Factors involved in setting a statutory school leaving age in Australia today", Western Australian Teachers Journal, 60, 4, May 1970.

In 1978, the situation concerning retention rates differs markedly from those cited in Table 2.1 partly because of structural unemployment (so that schools are receptacles for unemployed youth) and partly because of an increased commitment by the Australian community to the credentialling function of schooling (so that schools are seen as the institutions which facilitate upward social mobility mainly through providing the certification for post-secondary schooling). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics,³ the current situation concerning compulsory schooling in all States is as follows:

School attendance is compulsory through Australia between the ages of six and at least 15 in New South Wales, Victoria Queensland and South Australia, until the student turns 15 in Western Australia, and until the age of 16 in Tasmania. The various Education Acts require that all children between the prescribed ages must attend either a government school or some other recognised educational institution.

The estimates of the outflow of school leavers from the school systems in total are shown in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2

SCHOOL LEAVERS(a) BY SEX, AUSTRALIA, 1971-72 TO 1976-77
(^{'000})

Composition	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
Males	111.2	124.4	126.3	117.5	122.0	131.0
Females	104.3	110.8	113.9	108.7	113.2	117.2
Total	215.5	235.2	240.2	226.2	235.2	248.2

(a) School Leavers refers to persons leaving school; no information given as to stage or grade of leaving.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, Statistical Monograph No.1, School Leavers, Vols. 2 and 3, Canberra (1977, 1978).

In terms of the specific interest of this report, it can be seen that, on gross figures, fewer females than males left school in each of the last six years. That is to say, males constitute a higher proportion than females within the total group of leavers during the last six years. Such figures are, however, only marginally useful unless considered within a broader framework of participation and retention, and access to post-secondary schooling after leaving. The breakdown by sex is not available within each State system. However, an overview of the relative numbers of leavers presenting in each State and the two Territories (Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT)) from 1971-72 to 1977-78 and also those likely to leave in the next few years is presented in Table 2.3.

The largest concentrations of leavers occur in New South Wales and Victoria. Although fluctuation in trends occurred in all States between 1971-72 and 1974-75 the projections indicate a fairly stable pattern of retention without dramatic rises or falls for all States and both of the Territories.

TABLE 2.3

SCHOOL LEAVERS(a), ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES, AUSTRALIA, 1971-1972 TO 1980-81
(⁰⁰⁰)

	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81
NSW	74.9	82.1	83.4	78.5	79.0	84.5	85.7	86.2	86.4	84.8
Vic	58.9	64.5	66.3	60.4	63.7	67.5	68.0	68.8	68.5	67.7
Qld	31.7	34.0	35.0	34.6	35.9	37.2	38.4	39.3	39.0	38.5
SA	21.7	23.8	23.6	21.7	24.8	24.9	25.1	24.9	24.5	24.0
WA	17.7	19.3	19.8	18.7	20.3	21.6	21.7	22.2	22.3	22.3
Tas	7.6	8.0	8.2	7.7	7.9	8.3	8.4	8.3	8.2	7.9
NT	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7
ACT	2.0	2.4	2.6	2.9	2.5	3.1	3.4	3.6	3.8	3.8
Total	215.5	235.2	240.2	226.2	235.2	248.2	252.3	254.9	254.4	250.7

(a) School Leavers as calculated between August of the first year stated and August of the second year.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, Statistical Monograph No.1, School Leavers, Vol. 2. Canberra (1977, 1978).

Time of Leaving

As mentioned above, the timing of leaving is important in calculating all leaver statistics. While the Commonwealth Department of Education bases its estimates on figures from August to August of each year, various departmental and individual researchers calculate leaving statistics from the specific date or calendar month. Some State departments require monthly statistics to be kept on students leaving school during the year but this practice is by no means widespread. In the non-government sector, statistics of the kind supplied by the government school systems are generally not available. In addition, figures taken out in one year are not necessarily taken out the following year or for extended periods of time. For example, the data on time of leaving which appears in Table 2.4 is available for only three years, and those years are neither consecutive nor the most recent. In addition, they are calculated in percentages as distinct from total numbers and comprise figures not only for school leavers but for leavers from universities, Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE), and other educational institutions. This highlights the difficulty of obtaining separate statistics as distinct from combined statistics.

TABLE 2.4

LEAVERS^(a) FROM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BY SEX AND TIME OF LEAVING, AUSTRALIA, 1972, 1973 AND 1975
(Per cent)

	1972			1973			1975		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
January-June	11.4	13.4	12.4	11.3	9.9	10.6	10.0	10.1	10.1
July-October	11.6	14.2	12.8	13.8	16.2	15.0	9.3	13.2	11.1
November	43.1	40.6	41.9	43.4	44.5	43.9	37.4	36.6	37.1
December	33.9	31.9	32.9	31.5	29.5	30.6	43.4	40.0	41.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Leavers refer to persons aged 15-19 years who attended full-time study in the year indicated and who were not returning to full-time study at the time of the survey in the following year.

Includes school leavers, leavers from universities, CAE's and other educational institutions.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, Statistical Monograph No.1, School Leavers, Vol. 2. Canberra (1977).

Nevertheless, the data provided in Table 2.4 enabled some generalisations to be made concerning prime leaving times and for some general sex comparisons to be made. The vast majority of leavers terminate their formal education in the months of November and December and this has been the case for the three years under investigation (Table 2.4). Yet in 1975 at least one student in ten leaves between January and June, and between one in seven females and one in ten males during July and October. Such a pattern of leaving is of interest, not merely because it highlights the complexity of calculating comparable leaver statistics, nor because it provides an overview of leaving trends throughout the year, but rather because it foreshadows issues involved in providing career education at a time when all leavers can benefit from such provisions, not just those who terminate at the end of each calendar year. The only consistent sex difference is that more females leave during the months of July-October than do males.

Age and Sex Distribution of Leavers

The estimated percentage distribution of leavers from schools by age and sex in Australia over the period 1970-71 to 1980-81 are presented in Table 2.5.

TABLE 2.5

PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL LEAVERS, BY AGE(a) AND BY SEX, AUSTRALIA, 1970-71 TO 1980-81

	14 yrs or younger(b)		15 yrs		16 yrs		17 yrs		18 yrs		19+ yrs		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1970-71	17.4	20.9	26.3	30.7	23.1	23.6	22.7	19.6	8.5	4.5	1.9	0.6	100.0	100.0
1971-72	16.2	19.8	26.8	30.7	24.1	24.2	22.7	20.0	8.3	4.6	1.8	0.7	100.0	100.0
1972-73	17.2	20.3	26.3	29.8	24.3	23.6	22.4	20.8	7.9	4.8	1.8	0.8	100.0	100.0
1973-74	17.1	18.6	27.1	29.8	24.2	24.1	22.7	22.1	7.3	4.7	1.6	0.7	100.0	100.0
1974-75	15.9	17.3	26.8	29.1	25.2	24.6	24.0	24.1	6.5	4.0	1.6	0.9	100.0	100.0
1975-76	11.4	15.7	28.0	28.1	26.4	25.8	24.0	24.8	6.3	4.1	1.8	1.3	100.0	100.0
1976-77	11.4	13.1	28.4	27.4	27.9	27.5	24.4	26.1	6.3	4.4	1.7	1.4	100.0	100.0
1977-78	12.7	14.6	28.1	27.0	28.0	27.7	23.4	24.9	6.2	4.3	1.6	1.3	100.0	100.0
1978-79	12.6	14.4	27.7	26.6	27.9	27.6	24.0	25.7	6.2	4.3	1.7	1.4	100.0	100.0
1979-80	12.3	14.3	27.5	26.3	27.8	27.5	24.3	26.0	6.4	4.5	1.7	1.4	100.0	100.0
1980-81	12.4	14.5	26.8	25.9	27.9	27.4	24.5	26.1	6.6	4.6	1.8	1.5	100.0	100.0

(a) Age of leavers is at August of the first year stated. Leavers are those who left between August of the first year stated and August of the second year.

(b) Predominantly 14 year olds.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, Statistical Monograph No.1, School Leavers, Vol. 2. Canberra (1977).

Rather than highlighting sex differences in age of leaving, Table 2.5 suggests that there is a comparable pattern of male and female participation in schooling over the last five years or so. The projections until 1981 anticipate a steady maintenance of existing distribution patterns by age and sex. Such projections are interesting. In the absence however of specific information on variables considered in the calculation of such projections, one can only speculate on whether factors such as increasing credentialism within society and the growth of structural unemployment will lead to radically different trends in leaver statistics.

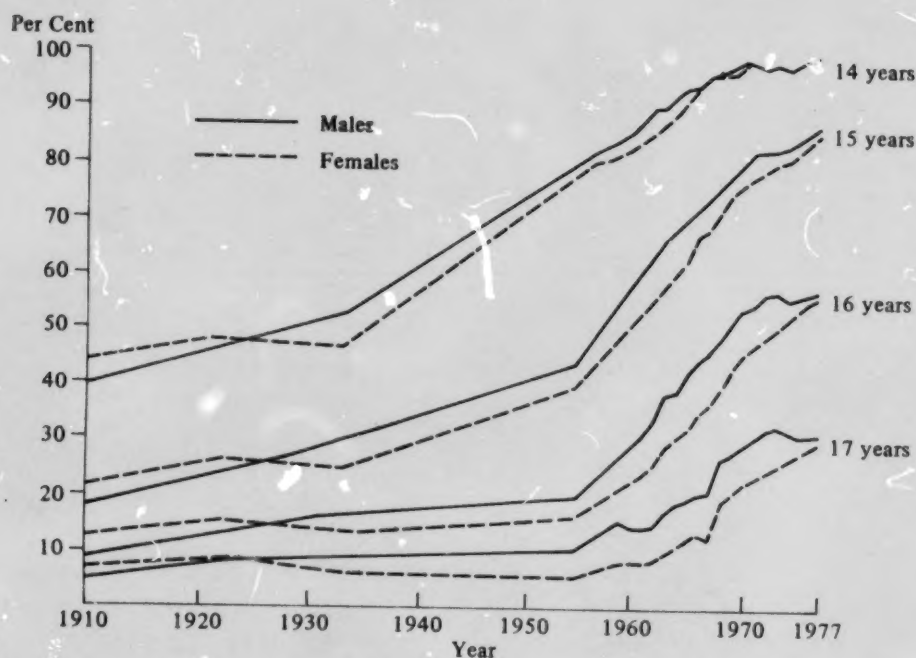
The comparability of age distribution of leaving for both sexes over the last five years is marked and the question arises as to whether this is a recent phenomenon, the result perhaps of social change, or whether the patterns of retention have always been similar for the sexes. The brief analysis of past trends which follows is an attempt to clarify this question.

Historical Trends in Leaving Patterns

The Report by a study group to the Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society* (1975) ⁴ traces the school participation rates of females and males by age in Australia from 1911-1973. Additional data has been included in Figure 2.1 to update the trends to 1978.

FIGURE 2.1

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION BY AGE AND BY SEX, AUSTRALIA, 1911-1977.



Adapted from: Schools Commission, *Girls, School and Society*
Report by a Study Group to the Schools Commission,
AGPS, Canberra, 1975.

Somewhat surprisingly, over the period 1910 to 1921, a higher proportion of females than males attended school at all ages between 14 and 17 years. No explanation for this higher rate of participation by girls is provided, nor for its reversal between the late twenties and early thirties. From 1933, and in all subsequent years until 1974, boys evidence a higher participation rate than girls at all ages. This is the case at all ages above the compulsory attendance requirement and even prior to that at age 14. Why the participation rates for girls fell and then increased and those of boys rose continuously during that period needs to be explained by social historians. The acceleration of participation rates by both

sexes in the late 1950's and early 1960's was affected primarily by changed statutory leaving age requirements. In addition, however, a period of rapid technological growth and an expansion in post-secondary education increased the holding power of schools, so that by the mid 1970's both sexes seemed to be participating equally in schools.

To take a contemporary perspective, therefore, it appears that there are no discriminatory practices against females as gauged from school participation rates. In Australia, at each age level, comparable percentages of males and females stay within the school setting. That is to say, the proportion of females leaving school at any one age, in any one year, is likely to be identical with or to approximate the proportion of male leavers. No sex differences in participation in schooling are evident at this general level of analysis, in Australia in 1978.

TABLE 2.6

APPARENT RETENTION RATES(a) FOR YEARS 10, 11 and 12, BY SEX, AUSTRALIA, 1971 TO 1976

Year and Grade	Males	Females	Persons
Year 12			
1971	34.1	26.9	30.6
1972	35.7	28.9	32.4
1973	35.2	30.8	33.1
1974	34.1	31.6	32.9
1975	34.6	33.6	34.1
1976	34.6	35.3	34.9
Year 11			
1971	50.0	41.8	46.0
1972	50.7	45.5	48.2
1973	49.9	46.9	48.4
1974	48.2	47.1	47.7
1975	50.7	50.3	50.5
1976	51.4	52.6	52.0
Year 10			
1971	81.9	79.7	80.8
1972	83.8	81.6	82.7
1973	82.5	81.6	82.1
1974	82.0	82.2	82.1
1975	84.8	85.1	84.9
1976	86.5	86.7	86.6

(a) The apparent retention rate is the ratio of enrolment in a particular school year to enrolments in the first secondary school year when the cohort of that school year commenced secondary schooling. The ratios are affected by transfers of students between school systems.

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, Statistical Monograph No.1, School Leavers, Vol. 2. Canberra (1977).

What of the allied statistics concerning retention rates? The data presented in Table 2.6 on the previous page indicates that, while the retention rates for males has been consistently higher than that for females, the differences have narrowed appreciably. Today, retention rates are comparable for the sexes. Indeed, on the basis of 1976 figures they are marginally higher for females.

State Trends in Leaver Statistics

Possibly as a result of different: statutory leaving age requirements, societal values, curricula structures, and patterns of assessment, State differences in retention rates have consistently varied over time. In examining why students in Victoria remained at school longer than students in other States, Fitzgerald (1970)⁵ argued that the structure of schools and the type of examination system were contributing factors. Differences in State philosophies were also included, for example the Victorian community was judged to be more sophisticated and interested in industrial and commercial careers for its young; by contrast, Tasmania, despite its statutory leaving age of 16 years was rural in orientation and the community failed to see the relevance of higher education to the work its youth would do in the future. Another factor that Fitzgerald stresses is the quality of the schools and their teachers. The Victorian system has been acclaimed for its innovation and the freedom given to staff to develop new courses that are directed at local interests and needs. The data from which Fitzgerald argues is based on 1967 and 1968 figures for school leavers of 14 to 19 years of age. The trend towards greater retention and higher subsequent enrolment in post-secondary education which is evident in the figures, clearly shows a higher commitment to education in Victoria. Unfortunately, no data on sex differences were available which would have enabled State by State sex comparisons to be drawn.

The question, a decade later, is whether there are still marked differences between States in their ability to retain students and to attract them into post-secondary education. The retention rates for girls and boys are presented by State in *Girls, School and Society* (1975)⁶, but the figures only run to 1974 and no age data is provided. However, in terms of basic trends, differences between the States have continued. This was especially so in the case of girls. In Victoria, the retention rate for girls was higher than that for boys in 1974. The most unfavourable retention rates for females were in the States of New South Wales and South Australia. Indeed, in appraising the future, the Committee who compiled *Girls, School and Society* were not optimistic concerning the educational participation of females:

The Committee has reservations about the optimistic prediction of the Schools Commission that equality of educational participation between the sexes is likely in the near future Differences

between the sexes in non-government schools remains considerable A long history of differences has particular significance for older women, and the dramatic reversal of the early 1930's underlines the powerful influence of general economic conditions in the situation.⁷

Ironically enough, the increasing retention rates in all States today are not manifestly a commitment to equality of educational opportunity for both sexes. Rather they represent a response to economic reversals. Higher structural unemployment, especially for the 15 to 19 age group, has meant that more male and female students are staying on at school merely because jobs are not available.

General trends in State comparisons of progression rates for Years 10-11 for each Australian State and the Australian Capital Territory, are presented in Table 2.7 to provide further information on the patterns of school leaving before State differences are explored.

TABLE 2.7

PROGRESSION RATES(a)(b) FOR YEAR 10 TO YEAR 11, BY SEX, ALL STATES AND THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA, 1971-72 TO 1976-77

Year	Sex	N.S.W.	Vic	Qld	S.A.	W.A.	Tas.	A.C.T.
1971-72	M	54.7	76.7	45.5	87.2	46.4	43.6	74.8
	F	45.6	76.4	40.4	77.0	49.5	42.0	69.8
1972-73	M	50.8	72.9	47.4	83.4	50.3	38.4	69.4
	F	45.4	75.2	41.7	78.4	54.5	40.4	69.0
1973-74	M	49.2	71.2	45.3	81.8	52.9	38.7	75.8
	F	45.2	74.8	43.4	77.6	56.4	43.6	70.9
1974-75	M	51.7	74.9	50.4	85.3	58.3	39.9	72.7
	F	49.1	78.6	46.2	81.8	61.2	43.7	69.1
1975-76	M	50.9	74.9	50.0	80.6	54.6	35.9	76.3
	F	50.0	78.8	47.5	80.4	61.2	44.3	81.3
1976-77	M	48.5	71.1	49.1	78.1	52.4	34.0	76.5
	F	50.3	79.6	50.2	82.8	62.1	41.6	74.8

(a) Can be influenced by interstate and overseas migration.

(b) Progression Rate is the percentage of students in Year 10 who proceed to Year 11 in the following year. (Not all students who do not proceed to Year 11 are school leavers, a small proportion repeat Year 10.)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics statistics unpublished.

The higher retention of boys and girls in Year 10 in Victoria and South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory is marked. Significantly lower retention rates in that Year 10 in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania are also clearly evident.

Details of increasing retention rates for both sexes in each State are discussed below. The statistics have, in each case, been provided by the appropriate State authority.

Victoria

In Victoria, the education department has provided six series of retention patterns for government secondary and technical schools. These include a sequence of trends from 1950 to 1977 and a breakdown of the percentages by sex since 1960. The retention rates since 1950 have risen from nine per cent to 41 per cent for Year 12 and from 47 per cent to 87 per cent for Year 10. For boys, the shift has been 34 per cent in Year 12 in 1960 rising to 48 per cent in 1970. For Year 10 boys the retention rate has risen from 78 per cent to 90 per cent. For girls, 18 per cent completed Year 12 in 1960 compared with 36 per cent in 1970. For Year 10 girls the retention rates rose from 64 per cent in 1960 to 84 per cent in 1970. By 1974, 90 per cent of females and 90 per cent of males remained until Year 10 in Victoria. In technical schools, which are more vocationally oriented, the patterns were that in 1970, 64 per cent remained to Year 10 and 18 per cent to Year 12. By 1970, 83 per cent remained to Year 10 and 42 per cent to Year 11 (which became the final year). By 1974, 87 per cent of students enrolling remained to Year 10. The sex differential in technical schools was evident in 1960 (49 per cent and 16 per cent of girls remaining to Years 10 and 11 respectively, compared with 61 per cent and 23 per cent of boys remaining for those years). Clearly technical schools catered more to the vocational aspirations of boys in the 1960's. By 1974, the retention rates were 96 per cent of girls in Year 10 and 92 per cent of boys - the discrepancy had disappeared by the time that cohort completed Year 10 and retention rates favoured females. A cautionary note is needed in any interpretation of this trend, however, since girls represent only about 20 per cent of the intake into technical schools, and fewer than half of all Victorian technical schools are co-educational.

The percentages of students remaining in the upper grades of Victorian high and technical schools in 1976 for Years 10, 11 and 12 are represented in Table 2.8.

The figures for a decade earlier are presented to show not merely a pattern of increasing retention for both sexes but also persistence in the trends for more boys than girls to stay on to Year 12 in high schools and for more girls than boys to stay on until Year 11 in technical schools. It will be interesting to explore whether the higher retention rates for girls in technical schools is an index of enhanced educational opportunity or the outgrowth of factors in the apprenticeship system which

enable boys to make a smooth transition from school to work but effectively locks out girls except in a few specific work areas. In technical schools the proportion of girls staying on to Year 11 has actually exceeded that of boys since 1971. In high schools girls still leave earlier than boys but not to such a marked degree as in earlier years. Over that ten-year timespan (1966-1977) the gap between the proportions of boys and girls staying has closed in both high and technical schools.

TABLE 2.8

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS REMAINING IN YEARS 10, 11, and 12, BY SEX
IN GOVERNMENT HIGH AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS, VICTORIA, 1966 AND 1976

	Year 10		Year 11		Year 12	
	1966	1976	1966	1976	1966	1976
Secondary schools						
(High)						
Boys	81	91	61	72	36	45
Girls	73	87	40	65	18	37
Total	76	89	49	68	25	41
Technical schools(a)						
Boys	71	85	31	47	-	-
Girls	62	84	24	60	-	-
Total	70	85	30	50	-	-

(a) Year 11 is the terminal year.

Source: Victorian Education Department, Planning Services Branch, Retention Patterns - Secondary and Technical Schools, 1950-1976.

New South Wales

In New South Wales the data which were provided by the New South Wales Department of Education were the retention rates from 1962 to 1977, based on enrolments from the August age-grade census of pupils. The actual number of students enrolled was supplied, as well as the retention rates for girls and boys. In 1962, 39.7 per cent of girls and 43.7 per cent of boys were in Year 10 compared with 15.9 per cent of girls in Year 12 and 22.3 per cent of boys. Clearly boys were staying on at schools longer than girls. By 1972, however, the pattern had changed. For Year 10, the retention rates for boys and girls were identical (77.5 per cent) while in Year 12 the retention rate for girls was marginally higher at 33.2 per cent compared with 31.1 per cent for boys. Again the trend is one of narrowing differences, by Year 12, with more females being retained in the system.

Indeed, in the 1975 Annual Report of the New South Wales Minister for Education, a direct reference is made to the changed pattern of retention rates for the sexes:

When retention rates of boys and girls are considered separately, it is evident that there have been greater increases in retention rates of girls than in retention rates of boys. Of the generation commencing secondary education in 1963, approximately 44 out of every 100 boys and approximately 40 out of every 100 girls reached Form IV. By 1975, retention rates of boys and girls had reached the same level at Form IV with approximately 78 out of every 100 boys and approximately 78 out of every 100 girls reaching this Form.

With respect to retention rates to Form VI, of the 1962 First Form entry approximately 22 out of every 100 boys and approximately 16 out of every 100 girls commencing the secondary course reached the final year. By comparison, in 1975 approximately 32 out of every 100 boys commencing their secondary schooling six years earlier and approximately 29 out of every 100 girls commencing the course reached Form VI. At the Form VI level the retention rate for boys actually declined from 34.9 per cent in 1972 to 31.4 per cent in 1974 while that for girls has increased steadily over the whole period since the introduction of the six year secondary course.⁸

Tasmania

The figures provided by the Research Branch of the Tasmanian Education Department span the years 1948 to 1976. The term used to signify retention rates was 'survival rates' and these are calculated as a percentage of the appropriate Year 6 enrolment through to Year 12. From 1964 to 1977 the retention in Year 12 rose from 5.3 per cent to 24.3 per cent. During that period the Year 12 retention rates for boys and girls were 7.2 per cent - 23.5 per cent and 3.2 per cent - 25.2 per cent respectively. The participation of girls in the final year of schooling remained well below that of boys until 1975, when the retention rate for girls in Year 12 exceeded that for boys and continued to do so. At Year 10, the 1964 figures were 36.8 per cent for boys and 33.6 per cent for girls. By 1975, the retention rates for Year 10 had increased to 73.0 per cent for boys and 73.9 per cent for girls - again, almost identical. The Tasmanian figures closely resemble the trends for Victoria and New South Wales that is a narrowing of the gap between the sexes and a higher proportion of girls in the final year of schooling.

Western Australia

The retention rates for males and females in government schools in Western Australia for the years 1972-1977 were supplied by the Research Branch of the Department of Education in Western Australia.

Take, for example, the 1977 figures:

- Of the 1976 Year 9 females, 93.9 per cent returned to Year 10.
- Of the 1976 Year 9 males, 93.4 per cent returned to Year 10.

Of the 1976 Year 10 females, 57.9 per cent returned to Year 11.
Of the 1976 Year 10 males, 48.0 per cent returned to Year 11.

Of the 1976 Year 11 females, 61.3 per cent returned to Year 12.
Of the 1976 Year 11 males, 61.4 per cent returned to Year 12.

The retention rate for females in Year 10 has increased from 88.4 per cent (1972) to 93.9 per cent (1977) while the male retention rate has remained steadier (91 per cent to 93.4 per cent). In Year 11, the increase in the retention rate for females is quite marked - 45.4 per cent (1972) to 57.9 per cent (1977) while for males it rose from 41.2 per cent to 48.0 per cent. Year 12 retention figures give the false impression that enrolments are decreasing. In fact, many students return to Year 11 terminal courses and Research Branch points out that the figures do not take this into account. In fact, Year 12 enrolments are stationary. In 1977, the retention rate from Year 11 to Year 12 was the same for males and females.

To summarise the situation in Western Australia retention rates for females in 1977 were the same, if not better, than those for male students.

For those interested in earlier figures for Western Australia, Barrett (1970) ⁹ contains figures showing retention rates from 1950-1967 but unfortunately these are not analysed by sex.

South Australia and Northern Territory

The figures for this section are taken from the 1977 Report of the Director-General of Education in South Australia. ¹⁰ The combined figures for South Australia and the Northern Territory date back to 1946 and again the pattern for overall retention rates is one of continued growth both in Year 10 and Year 12. By 1973, 29.8 per cent of secondary students in South Australia were in Year 12 and the retention rate for Year 10 students was 86.1 per cent (August figures). Breakdown of the figures by sex was provided from 1965-1977. In 1965, 23.2 per cent of boys were in Year 12 compared with 15.8 per cent of girls. By 1973, the gap had narrowed dramatically with 28.7 per cent of males and 30.6 per cent of females in Year 12 - again a recurrent trend in other States of higher female retention rates in the final year of schooling. The retention rates in Year 10 in 1975 were 84.6 per cent for boys and 88.7 per cent for girls. That is, in South Australia, more girls survive until Year 10 as well as Year 12, a trend not encountered in any of the other States. In South Australia the retention rates in the upper-secondary level are higher for females than for males.

Queensland

In Queensland, the data supplied by the State Department of Education was dated from 1970 to 1977. In 1970, the Year 12 retention rates for females were 25 per cent compared with 32.5 per cent for males (all schools). Within the State government system, however, female retention rates were a less favourable 19.5 per cent, but so too were the rates for males,

24.8 per cent. By 1977, the improvement in female retention rates was such that 36.3 per cent of females were completing the terminal leaver year (Year 12) compared with 35.6 per cent of males (all schools) a pattern of retention which was reflected in the government school system (females 31.4 per cent, males 28.3 per cent). Unfortunately, statistics for Year 10 were not provided.

SUMMARY

The pattern of retention rates for all States shows the current situation to be that the gap between the sexes has narrowed. Indeed in the final year of secondary schooling more girls are staying at school while a higher percentage of boys are leaving. In South Australia in particular, more females are participating in upper-secondary education. Certainly on the basis of the detailed State figures, and the trends outlined above there has been marked improvement in the schooling opportunities afforded to girls in all States in Australia.

The figures provided by the State departments are congruent with the State progression rates for females compared with males (Year 10-11) provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Table 2.9). Where the ratio exceeds '1', there is a higher participation rate by females. For all States, retention rates for Year 10 in 1976-77 were higher for females than for males (the exception being the Australian Capital Territory).

TABLE 2.9

RATIO OF FEMALE PROGRESSION RATES(a) TO MALE PROGRESSION RATES, YEAR 10 TO YEAR 11,
ALL STATES AND THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA, 1971-72 TO 1976-77

(Male Rate = 1.00)

	N.S.W.	Vic.	Qld	S.A.	W.A.	Tas.	A.C.T.
1971-72	0.83	1.00	0.89	0.88	1.07	0.96	0.93
1972-73	0.89	1.03	0.88	0.95	1.08	1.05	0.99
1973-74	0.92	1.05	0.96	0.95	1.07	1.13	0.94
1974-75	0.95	1.05	0.92	0.96	1.05	1.10	0.95
1975-76	0.98	1.05	0.95	1.00	1.12	1.23	1.07
1976-77	1.04	1.12	1.02	1.06	1.19	1.22	0.98

(a) See explanatory note on migration accompanying Table 2.7.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics statistics unpublished.

No case for discrimination against girls can be made out by using retention rates as an index of equal opportunity for girls to engage in the same length of schooling as boys. Indeed, questions arise as to why more boys are leaving and more girls staying. But equality of opportunity cannot be gauged by simply tracing leaving trends, it is equally important to consider indices of schooling other than retention rates to see what equipment for competence the female school leaver takes with her to work, whether she leaves in Year 10, Year 12 or in some intra year period. The antecedents and consequences of leaving need to be carefully explored before a final decision can be made as to whether female leavers are disadvantaged in comparison with their male counterparts.

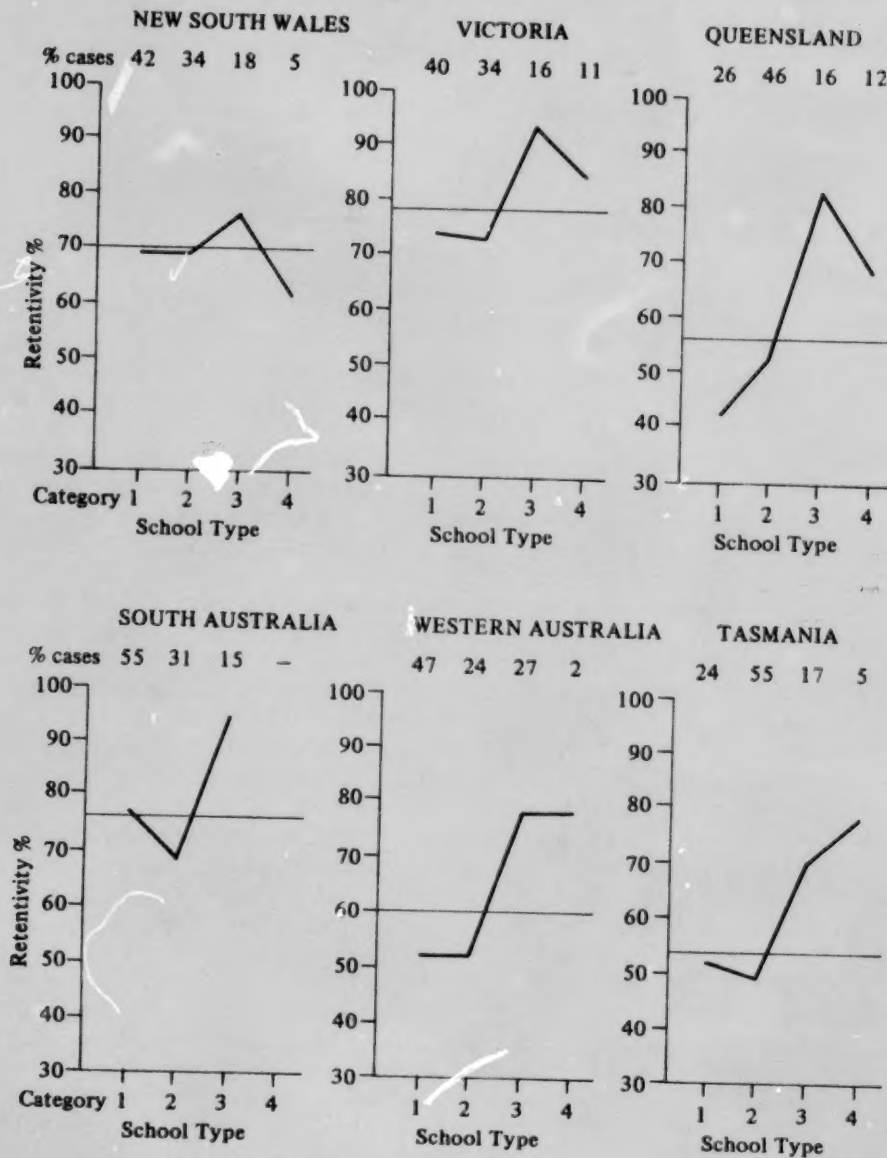
DIFFERENCES AMONG LEAVERS

System and Locale

The statistics discussed above refer to students in government schools. Although the Catholic Education Office in each State was contacted the response was generally that no available research existed examining sex differences. Nor were there comparable statistics available from the non-Catholic, non-government sector. The contrasts between school leavers in terms of attendance at government or non-government schools are therefore drawn from a recent publication by the Australian Council for Educational Research (Rosier, 1978)¹¹. A word of caution must be given however. Although Rosier's study was published in 1978, the data was collected from students in 1970 and 1972. In addition statistics collected were from a sample population only. The percentage of students in government schools, given by the sum of categories one and two in Figure 2.2, differed for each State, ranging from 71 per cent in Western Australia to 86 per cent in South Australia. The complements attended non-government schools. Rosier's estimates are based on a two-stage stratified probability sample with a constant overall sampling fraction within each State. His analyses of retentivity in government and non-government schools include the dimension of metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools. Australia is basically an urbanised society; the only States in which high proportions of students lived in rural areas are Tasmania 59 per cent and Queensland 48 per cent. In contrast, only 26 per cent of students in Western Australia are in non-metropolitan schools. From Figure 2.2 it can be seen that with the exception of non-metropolitan non-government schools in New South Wales, retentivity is higher for non-government schools than for government schools. Within the government system, retentivity was higher for metropolitan schools than for non-metropolitan schools in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, but not in Victoria and Queensland. Within the non-government system retentivity was higher in metropolitan schools in all States except Tasmania. South Australia, it will be noticed, had no non-government, non-metropolitan students. Interestingly, the differences in retentivity between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools

FIGURE 2.2

RETENTIVITY RELATED TO SCHOOL TYPE ADJUSTED FOR STUDENT BODY SOCIO ECONOMIC LEVEL AND SEX. ALL STATES. AUSTRALIA. 1970-72



Horizontal lines indicate grand means.

Key to categories: 1 = metropolitan government, 2 = non-metropolitan government, 3 = metropolitan non-government, 4 = non-metropolitan non-government.

Source: Rosier M. *Early School Leavers in Australia - Family, School and Determinants of the Decision of 16 year old Australians to Remain at School or to Leave*. Almquist and Wiksell International Stockholm, Sweden in collaboration with the Australian Council for Educational Research, Australia, 1978.

were greater in the non-government school sector. Yet, overall retentivity for non-government schools was fairly high in all States. A marked difference in retention rates between the States in the government sector was discerned by Rosier (1978). Retention rates were much lower in government schools in Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania than in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

Socio-Economic Status

The tendency for both males and females of higher socio-economic status to remain at school for longer periods relative to their lower socio-economic counterparts has long been established. The most recent documentation of this continuing trend is again provided by Rosier (1978)¹². From Figure 2.3 it can be seen that the percentage of leavers in each socio-economic category in each State differs. Queensland and Tasmania, for example, have a higher proportion of leavers in the lowest socio-economic group. While retentivity is not monotonic, there is a marked relationship between retentivity and high socio-economic status in all States. Regardless of socio-economic factors, Queensland, Western Australia, and Tasmania had lower retentivity rates. In the higher retentivity States (New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia), however, a higher proportion of students of lower socio-economic status remained at school than in the low retentivity States. That is to say, socio-economic status was a less important factor for students making school leaving decisions in higher retentivity States. In low retentivity States, however, socio-economic status could well be a critical determinant in the school leaving decision for students of both sexes.

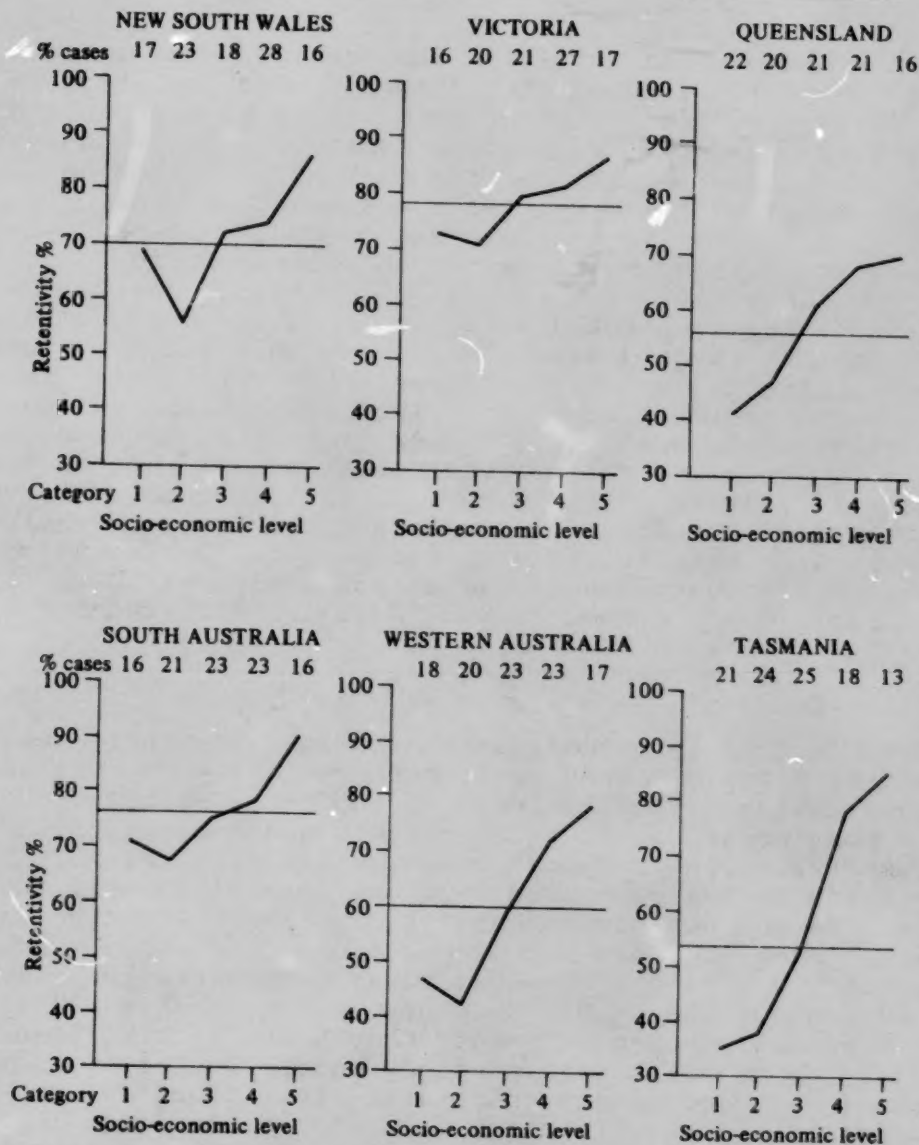
Sex Composition of Schools

The first secondary schools in Australia were single-sex, non-government schools. When government secondary schools were first established they followed a single-sex pattern. However, in the post-World War II phase there was a tendency for government schools to become co-educational, although segregation by sex continued in class streaming until the early 1970's. In the non-government sector, single sex schools continue to be the norm although economic and social factors are promoting a slight movement towards co-education. Twenty-one per cent of the students in government schools and 94 per cent of those in non-government schools are in single-sex schools. No major Australian study before Rosier examined the effect of sex composition on retentivity. Therefore the basis for considering this dimension is again adapted from this monograph. Rosier explored the proposition that retentivity is higher in single-sex schools than in mixed schools. It would appear that the female in a single-sex school is less likely to be an early leaver.

Retention patterns are further complicated by the fact that attendance at single-sex non-government schools is generally associated with higher socio-economic status which is itself

FIGURE 2.3

RETENTIVITY RELATED TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL, ADJUSTED FOR HOME LITERACY,
PARENT INTEREST AND SEX, ALL STATES, AUSTRALIA, 1970-72



Horizontal lines indicate grand means.
Key to categories: 1 = low to 5 = high

Source: Rosier M. *Early School Leavers in Australia*.

associated with higher retentivity. In Figure 2.4 therefore, Rosier (1978)¹³ examined the influence of the sex composition of schools on retentivity after controlling for factors such as school type, socio-economic status, and sex. Retention rates, overall, were higher in single-sex schools than in co-educational schools. In Victoria and South Australia the retentivity in male and female single-sex schools was similar. However it is interesting that in South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania male single-sex schools had higher retention rates than female single-sex schools, while in New South Wales and Queensland the reverse was true. Overall, as an explanation of school leaving the contribution of 'sex composition of the school' was not high among Rosier's complex of environmental variables. Nevertheless, that the tendency for students to remain at school was greater in single-sex schools than in co-educational schools, should not be ignored.

Migrant Origin

The influence of ethnic origin on retentivity has been investigated by a number of researchers (e.g. Connell et al 1975¹⁴ Taft 1975¹⁵ Martin and Meade 1978¹⁶). Because of high educational aspirations, students of ethnic origin tend to stay at school longer, although this does vary according to the particular ethnic group. In addition, within ethnic groups there has been evidence of a differential pattern of educational aspirations for male as against female students. However, using language spoken in the home as an index of migrant origin, Rosier (1978) has examined the extent to which speaking English or an ethnic language is positively associated with retentivity. No clear relationship was established. Clearly the question of cultural differences in commitment to schooling and associated patterns of retentivity needs to be more fully investigated for each ethnic group singly, before statements about retentivity of ethnic groups can be made confidently.

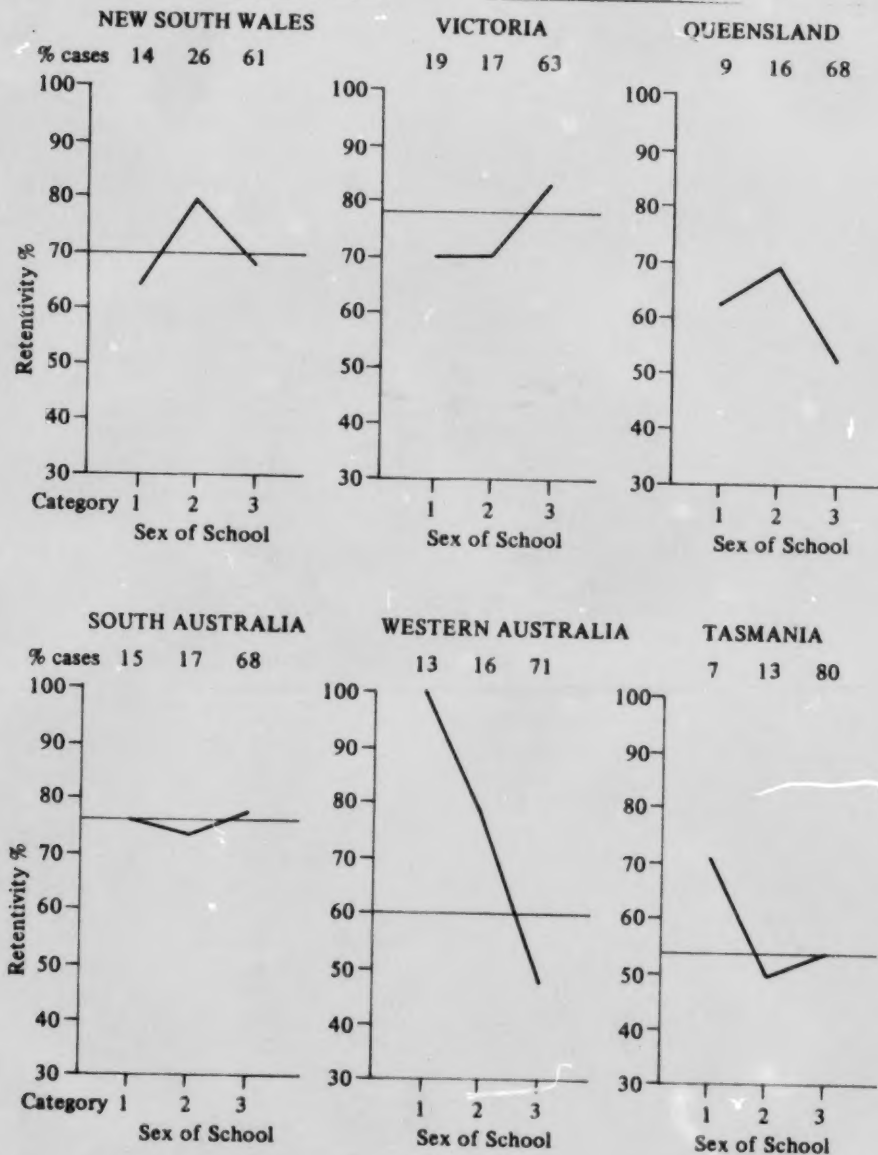
Aboriginal Origin

The markedly lower levels of participation by male and female Aborigines in formal education in Australia is documented in a variety of sources (for example, Aboriginal Secondary Grants Information Bulletin 1978,¹⁷ Aboriginal Access to and Use of Technical and Further Education 1976,¹⁸ Watts 1976,¹⁹ Binnion 1976²⁰).

The most comprehensive analysis of Aboriginal girls (and women) in relation to possible sex-discrimination in retentivity is provided in *Girls, School and Society* 1975.²¹ To gauge whether female Aborigines were educationally disadvantaged (because of sex as well as race), data was collected on girls' participation at school. Somewhat surprisingly, a higher proportion of Aboriginal females than males were still at school at each age level from 14 to 17 years inclusive. The proportions beyond that age are very small for both sexes, but males are better represented than females. Overall, Aboriginal retentivity is markedly lower than that for Celtic-Australians:

FIGURE 2.4

RETENTIVITY RELATED TO SEX OF SCHOOL, ADJUSTED FOR SCHOOL TYPE, STUDENT BODY SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL AND SEX, ALL STATES, AUSTRALIA, 1970-72



Horizontal lines indicate grand means.

Key to categories: 1 = male students only, 2 = female students only, 3 = both male and female students.

Source: Rosier M. *Early School Leavers in Australia*.

At age 16, 25 per cent of aboriginal males were in school and 31 per cent of females, compared with the Australian average of 58 per cent of males and 50 per cent of females of similar age. *Girls, School and Society*, 1975²².

According to the figures in the McKinnon Report, only three per cent of Aborigines had proceeded beyond Year 10 at school. The percentage of Aboriginal senior secondary students continuing their schooling in Years 11 and 12 is approximately one third of the enrolment proportion for non-Aboriginal secondary students. The Commonwealth Department of Education found that in 1977, 28 per cent of 16 year old Aborigines were at school - compared with 58 per cent of non-Aboriginal 16 year olds.

SUMMARY

The general trends in leaver statistics for Australia as a whole and for each State Department, indicate increased participation rates for females. Fewer females are leaving early or on reaching the statutory leaving age. In addition, more females are participating in the upper levels of secondary education.

There are differences among the retention rates of female students, however, these are associated with socio-economic status, the system of schooling in which they are enrolled, whether they live in rural or urban areas and whether they are of Celtic-Australian, migrant or Aboriginal origin.

Unfortunately, detailed statistics on how these dimensions affect female leavers are not readily available, and State comparisons need to be made on these dimensions. Composite figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics are lacking and national trends are not drawn very readily. Clearly more research is needed to determine the relative life chances of female leavers in various social and cultural categories. This research focus is being pursued by individual researchers but no national study has considered all of these basic descriptors and how they might influence the school leaving decisions of females.

An analysis of leaving trends for the sexes may well be misleading. The leaving patterns for the sexes may be very similar, but leaving per se is not the critical determinant. What happens to female school leavers once they have made the decision to terminate their schooling? Do they obtain employment? Do they proceed to post-secondary education? Do they add to the pool of unemployed youth in our society? Are the paths of female school leavers different in these respects from those of male school leavers, or are the issues relevant to youth generally in Australian post-industrial society? These are some of the issues that are taken up, at broad level, in the next chapter, and in more detail in separate analyses of various Australian studies on school leavers.

CHAPTER 3

DESTINATION OF LEAVERS

What happens to school leavers? Where do they go? The cultural values of Australian society suggest to youth that there are two acceptable pathways: from school to a good, secure job; or from school to post-secondary education which in turn will be the key to an even better, more secure job. There are avenues which permit both work and extended schooling, for example apprenticeships, but usually decisions are taken to enter the workforce or to continue in post-secondary education.

There are major changes occurring in Australian society, however, which are affecting the destinations of school leavers quite dramatically. The relative position of female leavers in this climate of change needs careful monitoring. The issues are more complex than those of inequality of educational opportunity, however, and reflect changing social and economic patterns:

Profound shifts in the workforce have produced serious social as well as economic effects. Fewer people - especially teenagers - have jobs and therefore depend on unemployment relief. Employers today seek experienced workers rather than school leavers. Many young people are therefore locked out of the world of work. Others find themselves locked into jobs which offer little or no sense of future progress. The victims - whether employed or not - come especially from disadvantaged groups such as women, migrants, Aborigines and rural dwellers. (Fitzgerald, McLure, Baker and Phillips 1978).¹

These changes have developed fairly rapidly. The degree to which national figures on the destinations of leavers reflect the increasing dislocation of youth from society, both male and female, is problematic. Useful information is likely to emerge from small scale studies which focus on the transition from school to work. Such studies are explored in subsequent chapters since the present chapter merely attempts to plot the pathways taken by male and female leavers in fairly general terms, and to determine whether female leavers are more at risk along the various pathways.

The destinations available to school leavers are: immediate employment, continuation of education in post-secondary institutions, apprenticeships or non-work (unemployment). The figures provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) pertain to leavers from schools, universities or other educational institutions. Leavers are defined as persons who had not attended an educational institution full time at any time in 1977 but who had completed or withdrawn from a course they were attending full time in an educational institution in 1976. Unfortunately, it is not possible to obtain statistics for school leavers in certain work categories. However, by using data provided for 15-19 year olds and 20-25 year olds it is possible to pursue the question of what happens to female leavers over a broader age span.

NUMBER OF LEAVERS

The numbers of leavers from educational institutions for 1977, as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics are shown in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1

LEAVERS(a) FROM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BY AGE GROUPS 15-19 YEARS AND 20-25 YEARS, BY SEX AND PLACE OF BIRTH, ALL STATES, AUSTRALIA, 1977 ('000)

	15-19 Years			20-25 Years			Total
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	
New South Wales	27.7	25.5	53.2	7.6	8.8	16.4	69.7
Victoria	24.5	23.3	47.8	7.0	7.0	14.0	61.8
Queensland	17.8	14.8	32.5	3.0	3.0	6.0	38.5
South Australia	10.4	9.2	19.6	*	*	4.5	24.1
Western Australia	9.4	7.5	17.0	2.4	*	4.3	21.3
Tasmania	3.3	2.7	5.9	*	*	*	6.9
Australia(b)	94.9	85.0	180.0	23.1	23.8	47.0	226.9
Born in Australia	84.8	72.1	156.8	20.3	19.9	40.1	197.0
Born Outside Australia	10.2	13.0	23.1	*	4.0	6.8	30.0

* Subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes.

(a) See explanatory note for 'Leavers' accompanying Table 2.4.

(b) Includes the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

Source: Derived from Australian Bureau of Statistics 'Leavers from Schools, Universities or Other Educational Institutions, August 1977'; (Australian Bureau of Statistics Catalogue No.6227.0) Canberra 1978.

For the 15-19 year old group, more males than females left, a consistent pattern in each State. In the age group 20-25 years, more females than males left overall, although in Victoria and Queensland there was no difference. The most noticeable difference occurred in the State of New South Wales. What were the destinations of the leavers? How many went into the work force? What occupations did they follow? What numbers of these leavers remained unemployed?

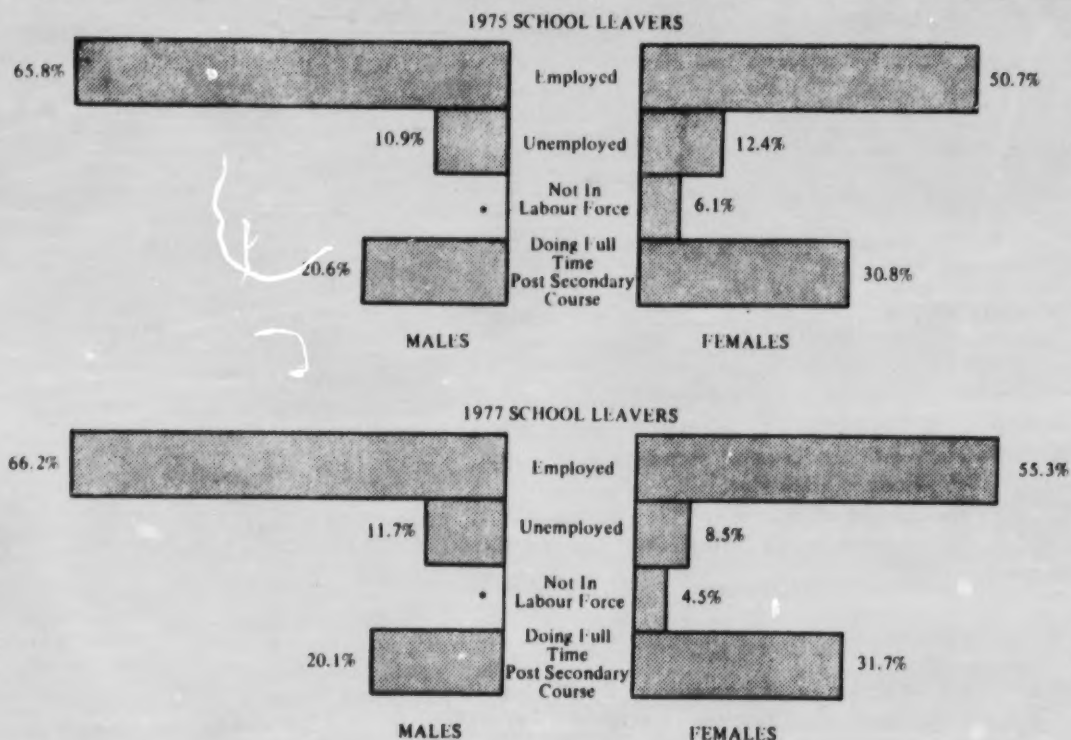
GENERAL PATTERN

Before considering the current figures on the destinations of school leavers, it is interesting to ask what trends have been emerging this decade in relation to employment, non-employment, and post-secondary education for male and female leavers.

A comparison between 1976 and 1978 statistics is presented in Figure 3.1.

FIGURE 3.1

DESTINATIONS IN 1976 AND 1978, OF ALL PERSONS WHO LEFT SCHOOL IN 1975



Subject to sampling variability too high for statistical purposes.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Unpublished.

The most striking features during that period were: an increase in the proportion of leavers who immediately entered employment (particularly females); and a relative decline in female unemployment, compared with a rise in male unemployment. The majority of females pursuing full time post-secondary education was enrolled in Colleges of Advanced Education. More males than females were enrolled at universities. Perhaps the most obvious trend is the percentage of females classified as Not in the Labour Force, as contrasted with a figure for males too small for statistical calculation. During the period 1976-78 the number of female school leavers in this category decreased.

Employment

The occupations of leavers in 1977 are presented in Table 3.2

TABLE 3.2

OCCUPATION OF LEAVERS(a) BY SEX, AUSTRALIA, 1977
(¹000)

	Male	Female	Total
Professional and technical	14.6	22.1	36.7
Administrative, executive managerial and clerical	13.4	36.3	49.7
Sales	7.2	12.3	19.5
Farmers, fishermen, timber getters	8.3	*	*
Transport and communication	*	*	*
Tradesmen, production-process workers, labourers (n.e.c.)(b) and miners, etc.	50.0	5.8	55.8
Service, sport and recreation	*	8.6	11.9
Total	98.6	86.7	185.3

* Subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes.

(a) See explanatory note for 'Leavers' accompanying Table 2.4.

(b) n.e.c. - Not elsewhere classified.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 'Leavers from Schools, Universities or Other Educational Institutions, August 1977 (Australian Bureau of Statistics Catalogue No.6227.0) Canberra 1978.

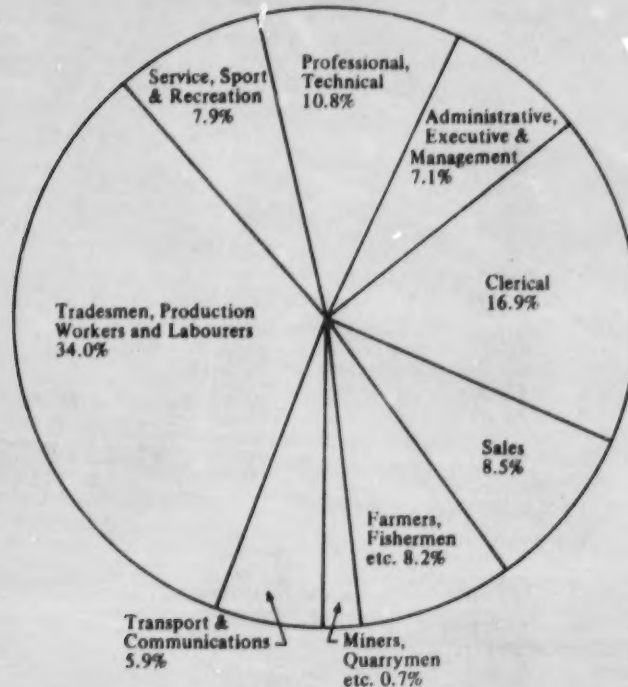
Within the general framework of the occupational structure of the Australian workforce, the different destinations of male and female leavers described above are more easily discerned when represented graphically as in Figure 3.2.

The preponderance of male leavers in trades, production process work is most marked (60.7 per cent), and it is obvious that more than half the female leavers fall into two occupational categories - clerical (40.3 per cent) and sales (28.3 per cent). The occupational destinations of male and female leavers are very different, and it is important to consider what the consequences of these different paths entail in terms of earning potential, prestige, power and job satisfaction.

Some 98,600 males were employed as against 86,700 females. The categories of employment are of interest also. Technical categories are amalgamated with professional; and clerical amalgamated with managerial. It therefore appears that more females than males are in these occupational fields. However, the pattern for males and females, within the category 'professional and technical' would be something like this: males in higher status professional and technical categories, females in lower status professions and technical work. Similarly in the administrative, executive, managerial and clerical categories, men would predominate in positions of status and power and women would mainly fill secretarial and lower level clerical jobs. More females are employed in sales and here again a different sex-linked bias

FIGURE 3.2

OCCUPATIONAL DIVISIONS IN AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE, 1971.

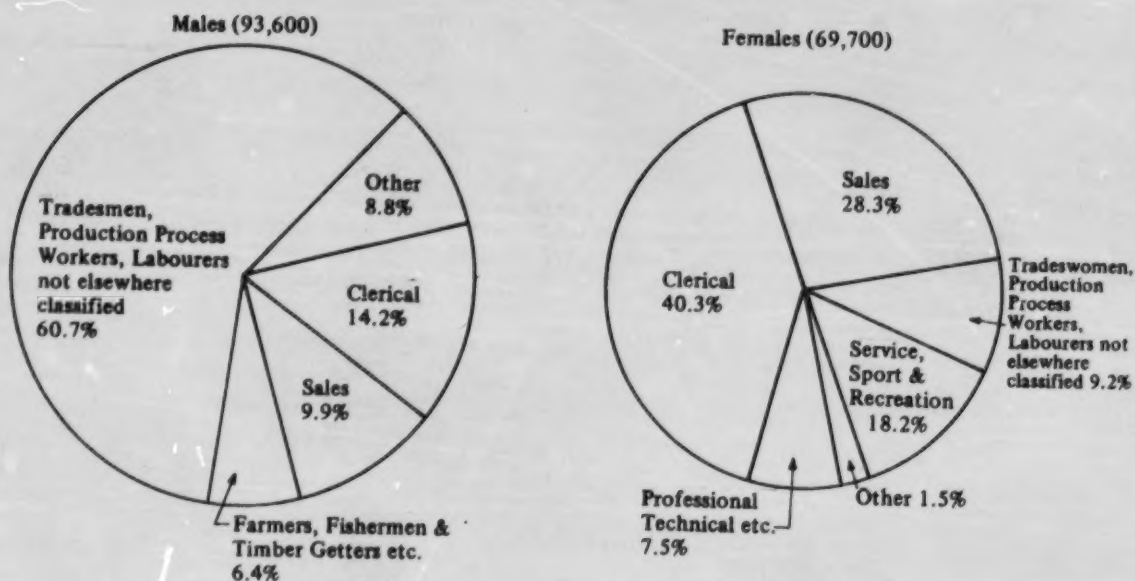


Source: 1971 *Census of Population and Housing*. Australian Bureau of Statistics.

in work exists in Australian society. Females are predominantly engaged in customer sales on a wage basis whilst men are engaged in entrepreneurial sales, marketing or sales supervision. In a total category of employment which absorbed 8,300 males, that is farming, fishing, timber getting, no reliable estimates of female participation were available. It seems that a major series of primary industries affords little employment for female leavers. The greatest sex contrast in destination after leaving, however, is in the area of skilled and semi-skilled work - 50,000 males to 5,800 females among the leavers were employed as tradesmen, production-process workers, labourers, miners, etc. In Australia 'blue collar work' is often more highly paid than 'white collar work'. As a result, male leavers are again placed in an advantageous earning position relative to females. Females predominate in the category 'service, sport and recreation'. However as can be seen from Figure 3.3, this category of employment is a small one within the total occupational structure of the Australian work force, as is the 'farmers, fishermen, timber getters etc.' category.

FIGURE 3.3

PERCENTAGE OF LEAVERS FROM SCHOOL BY SEX IN 1975 WHO WERE EMPLOYED IN MAY 1976 - OCCUPATION



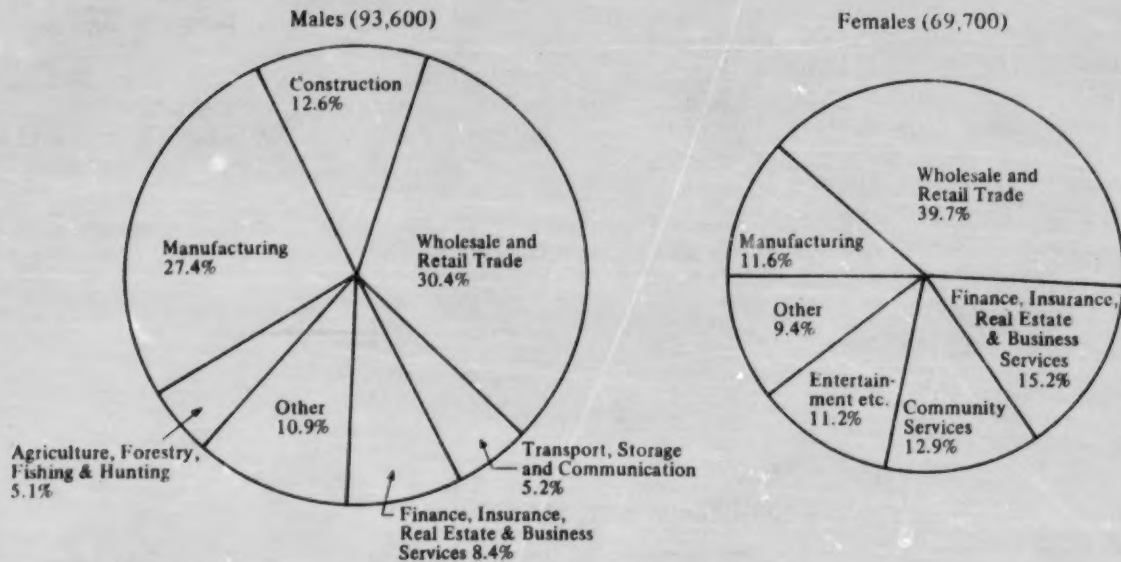
Source: *School Leavers Volume 2. Statistical Monograph No.1.*
Commonwealth Department of Education, Australia, August 1977.

It is very interesting to examine more closely the specific destinations of male and female leavers within the same occupational category. Is there, a similar job distribution for males and females once they have decided to follow the same career path.

From Figure 3.4, it can be seen that major differences exist between male and female leavers in the ways in which they participate in the industrial structure.

FIGURE 3.4

PERCENTAGE OF LEAVERS FROM SCHOOL BY SEX IN 1975 WHO WERE EMPLOYED IN MAY 1976 - INDUSTRY



Source: *School Leavers Volume 2. Statistical Monograph No.1.*
Commonwealth Department of Education, Australia, August 1977.

Nearly twice the percentage of female school leavers as compared with males are employed in the finance, insurance and business industries, but even after years of service females would rarely be found in upper administrative positions. The ratio of males to females entering the manufacturing industry is more than two to one. Again it could be anticipated that males are more likely eventually to become engaged in skilled manufacturing jobs or in ownership positions, while females are more likely to be in poorly paid process jobs. Females are markedly absent from the construction industry and males are markedly absent from community service. The absence of males in the entertainment industry compared with 11.2 per cent of female leavers, highlights another interesting difference between the likely destinations of male and female leavers. Participation of male and female school leavers is most similar in the wholesale and retail trade. Again it is worth considering the

type of employment involved - who produces the goods for retail, who supervises their production and sale, and who owns the wholesale and retail trades? Sex differences in the earning and career potential of males and females within this sector are similar to those in any other occupational sector.

Unemployment

The current unsatisfactory economic situation in Australia, with high but reducing inflation and high but increasing unemployment, has meant that many leavers have not been able to gain entry into the workforce. The problem has been compounded by demographic factors such as the high birth rates of the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the result that more persons are now at the age of entry into the labour force. In addition, with a higher percentage of married women returning to employment in their thirties and forties, an age and sex related structural change has occurred. The numbers of unemployed school leavers in each State are broken down by sex and shown in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3

UNEMPLOYED SCHOOL LEAVERS, BY SEX, ALL STATES AND THE
NORTHERN TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA, MAY 1975 TO MAY 1978

	May 1978			May 1977	May 1976	May 1975
	Males	Females	Total	Total	Total	Total
New South Wales (a)	5,532	6,371	11,903	11,285	7,617	5,539
Victoria	3,692	4,540	8,232	7,276	5,940	4,142
Queensland	1,988	2,067	4,055	3,748	2,623	2,177
South Australia	1,539	2,297	3,836	2,842	1,692	1,637
Western Australia	819	1,132	1,951	1,540	1,314	1,107
Tasmania	632	712	1,344	1,251	937	692
Northern Territory	41	16	57	89	25	27
Australia	14,243	17,135	31,378	28,031	20,148	15,321

(a) Includes the Australian Capital Territory.

Source: Department of Employment and Industrial Relations 'Monthly Review of the Employment Situation' May 1978, Canberra 1978.

From May 1975 to May 1978, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of unemployed school leavers. In nearly every State the numbers of unemployed leavers have doubled within three years. While detailed sex breakdowns in unemployment

were not obtained for 1975-1977. The current picture is one of higher unemployment for females, a consistent pattern in each State, the only exception being in the Northern Territory (where there are fewer females in the total population). The interesting question is why, with more males leaving schools, the rates of unemployment are not higher for males than for females. Certainly more male leavers are absorbed into employment than are females. The question is whether this is because of differences in ability or the superior credentials of males or whether it is due to differing expectations that are based on sex role stereotypes.

Leavers Proceeding to Further Study

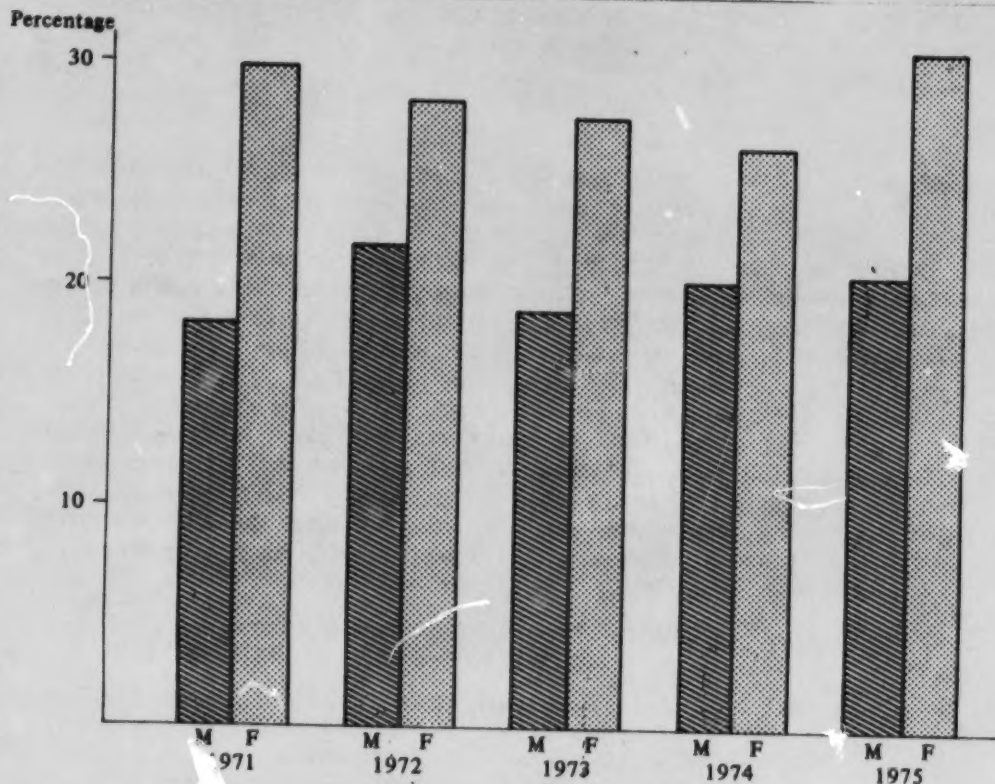
Increasingly more school leavers are proceeding to further study. Within this rising proportion, the percentage of females has been climbing. This greater participation by both sexes in further study, however, is reputed to be suffering a reversal. In the current economic climate, there has been an increase in the number of unemployed graduates in occupations such as teaching, law, engineering and veterinary science. The hypothesis that is being ever more frequently proposed is that youth are becoming disenchanted with further education since it is no longer a certain means of obtaining a well paid job. An over-supply of graduates has led some academic and political figures in Australian society to urge youth to curb their educational aspirations. In contexts such as these the female school leaver may be under pressure to lower both her educational and occupational aspirations.

The percentage of school leavers who were engaged in full-time study (1971 to 1975) are shown, by sex, in Figure 3.5.

The trend is interesting and indicates that more girls than boys are engaged in full-time studies (ranging from hairdressing to courses in Colleges of Advanced Education and universities). The trends are somewhat erratic, however, and cannot be interpreted fully in isolation from other data, such as whether more males are combining work and part-time study (and whether or not there are more opportunities for males to engage in this pattern of part work/part study); Whether girls are choosing to continue their education because they see this path as their major avenue for equality of job opportunity; or whether because there are not the jobs available, female leavers choose further study in preference to unemployment. These are the sorts of analyses that are generally lacking in Australia. Consequently, the increased patterns of participation for females need to be viewed with caution as they may reflect other processes operating within the society rather than, as seems on face value, an advantageous position for female leavers in relation to pursuing full-time studies.

FIGURE 3.5

PERCENTAGE OF LEAVERS FROM SCHOOL CONTINUING FULL-TIME STUDIES.
AUSTRALIA. 1971 TO 1975



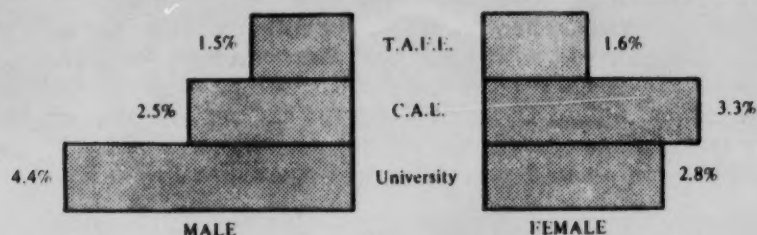
Source: *School Leavers Volume 2. Statistical Monograph No.1.*
Commonwealth Department of Education. Australia. August 1977.

The distribution of male and female leavers in terms of type of post-school institution attended is presented in Figure 3.6 for the age group 15 to 24 (as at May, 1976).

There are subtle but significant sex differences in each of the categories. Males predominate in terms of enrolment at universities while significantly more females attend Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs). The high income, high prestige occupations of law and medicine, for example, attract more males and require a university education. The moderate income, moderate prestige occupations of teaching and para-medical work attract more females and the training is more likely to occur in CAEs.

FIGURE 3.6

PERCENTAGE OF 15-24 YEAR OLDS ATTENDING POST SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS, FULL-TIME, BY SEX AND TYPE OF INSTITUTION, AUSTRALIA, 1976.



Sources: *University Statistics Part I, Students*. ABS Catalogue No. 4208.0 Canberra, January 1977.

Colleges of Advanced Education. ABS Catalogue No. 4206.0 Canberra, April 1977.

Selected TAFE Statistics 1976. Tertiary Education Commission, Canberra.

What is surprising is that 1.6 per cent of females are enrolled in TAFE courses (predominantly in apprenticeships such as hair-dressing), compared with 1.5 per cent of males. Since more males than females obtain apprenticeships it is surprising that the differences are not more marked.

SUMMARY

The proportion of male and female leavers who are engaged in work, post-secondary education and non-work have varied throughout the past decade. While it is difficult to obtain comparable figures for 15 to 19 year olds or 15 to 24 year olds over a given time span, some weak but consistent trends emerge. Females who enter employment are more restricted than males both in terms of the industries to which they gain access and the categories of employment that they fill within these industries. Many occupational categories are simply not available for female leavers. The incidence of female unemployment was higher at both the beginning and end of this decade. In the mid 1970s, the rate of female unemployment dropped but it has risen again during the current period of high unemployment for all school leavers. In terms of the total number of leavers, however, it is surprising that since more males leave educational institutions, their rate of unemployment is not higher. This is all the more puzzling when the statistics for those proceeding to further study are examined. More girls than boys between the ages of 15 to 24 are engaged in full-time study. It seems somewhat paradoxical therefore that a higher proportion of females are unemployed. This suggests that the destination of female leavers needs to be considered more closely. More detailed age breakdowns

for both sexes on categories of employment, non-work and further study are needed to enable current trends to be monitored. The age range of 15 to 24 is too large to permit any but the most general set of inferences to be drawn about the destinations of early female leavers.

Another level of analysis, which should illuminate some of the trends outlined above and sharpen our understanding of the pathways open to female leavers can be provided through the examination of a selection of specific research projects on school leavers in Australia, some of which are national, some regional and some small-scale case studies.

CHAPTER 4

MAJOR NATIONAL STUDIES OF SCHOOL LEAVERS IN AUSTRALIA

The first major study of school leavers in Australia was undertaken in 1960 by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). This study was subsequently replicated in 1971. What was the motivation for this nation-wide survey of leavers? What basic trends emerged? To what extent were the results of the second survey similar to the first? What aspects of school leaving were investigated? These are some of the questions explored in the first part of this chapter.

The second major set of leaver studies, which are most recent, were undertaken for the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. It is interesting to consider why such a Commission sought to examine the prospects facing school leavers. In particular, one of the commissioned studies focussed on the situation of female school leavers from an inner city high school. Was there some expectation by the Commission that school leavers were disadvantaged within the society, and that female leavers in particular were at risk? The second part of this chapter addresses itself to these and related issues.

STUDIES ON LEAVERS BY THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (ACER)

The only Australia-wide investigations of aspects relating to school leaving have been undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research. The first report (1960), a precursor to the fully national study, was entitled *School Pupils and School Leavers in Five States*.¹ It contained estimates of numbers from successive 13-year old generations of school children who would continue at, or leave school. The interest in that period was the explosion of numbers of students continuing into the secondary school sector. Projection figures by age and by State are detailed. There was no breakdown of numbers by sex or by school type, even though differences in these areas were briefly acknowledged in the report:

There will be differences between the pattern of leaving in government and non-government schools, we realize, and between boys and girls. For a State, however, we believe that it is the total numbers seeking employment, and any marked fluctuations in those, which are important. *School Pupils and School Leavers in Five States (1960)*.²

The major results of the study showed a clear trend in all States for an increasing percentage of successive 13-year-old generations to stay on at school for one to four plus years before leaving. This trend away from early leaving was perceived as cushioning the impact on the employment market. Even with this trend, two States (Victoria and Queensland) did experience a marked increase in the numbers of early and terminal school leavers.

Issues related to the social class and/or sex of the leavers were ignored in this study. The focus was demographic - numbers passing through schools, leavers moving into the workforce.

School Leavers in Australia 1959-60: Radford (1962) ³

The second and much larger study undertaken by ACER was entitled *School Leavers in Australia 1959-60*. ³ It was an exercise in national stocktaking to assist those concerned with economic development, with employment and with higher education:

At present more than 150,000 young people leave Australian schools each year. Information about where they then go has hitherto been limited. Only in South Australia and Tasmania (for all Government schools), in Victoria (for some Government schools) and in Western Australia (for Government schools in 1958) has this information been available. (Radford 1962) ⁴.

The survey included all schools in Australia from which students would be leaving for work or for post-secondary education between 1 April, 1957 and 31 March, 1960. Complete information was obtained for 114,000 leavers (about 80 per cent of all school leavers for that period).

The focus again was largely demographic, tracking leavers through school systems and then into employment or post-secondary education. This focus meshed with the concerns of society at that time. This survey, however, provided a much more complete statistical picture of school leavers across Australia than did the first. It provided not merely comprehensive State statistics on leavers but also contrasted school type differences, social class differences and metropolitan and non-metropolitan characteristics. Although there was no specific concern with sex as a dimension of leaving, the sex variable was treated systematically in statistics relating to occupational choice. In terms of social science enquiry generally, the study has added interest - it considered aspects of early leaving by able children; espoused the philosophy that a job is an important part of life, and that the school curricula should equip the school leaver with knowledge relevant to job needs.

What were the major findings? In general terms when did students leave? It seemed that about 75 per cent of both boys and girls left school in the last two months of the school year (November-December). In every month of the school year, some students left. This was more the case in government schools than in non-government schools. At what age did leaving take place? About one third of the leavers left at or before 15 years of age, about two thirds left at or before 16 years, and about 86 per cent at or before age 17. A major sex difference in age of leaving was discerned: girls left at younger ages than boys, and higher percentages of girls left than boys at ages 15, 16 and 17 (37 per cent vs 31 per cent; 71 per cent vs 64 per cent; 89 per cent vs 83 per cent respectively). Retention in government schools was lower at the lower ages than all other school types. Marked sex differences occurred in the proportions of males and females entering particular occupations and types of post-secondary education.

Five girls for every two boys entered clerical work; a higher proportion of girls entered teachers' colleges; about nine boy leavers as compared with five girl leavers entered universities; of those who entered senior technical colleges, there were seven girls for every four boys. Very few girls entered the skilled trades and the overwhelming majority in trades were in hairdressing while boys entered such diverse fields as boilermakers, radio mechanics, plasterers, panel beaters and so on. Very few girls took up jobs on the land (primary production). Twice as many boys as girls entered semi-professional occupations. Few boys entered nursing whereas large numbers of girls did; few boys contemplated home duties whereas large numbers of girls did. With this obvious pattern of sex differences in occupational destination it is surprising that the emphasis in the conclusion is on the loss and untapped talent of leavers from unskilled and semi-skilled homes, from farms, and of leavers attending non-metropolitan schools. Large numbers of boys and girls left school earlier than they should (in relation to their ability level). The concern was loss of individual talent to the community - especially from lower socio-economic groups, students attending government schools and students living in rural areas. The study was located early in the decade of concern about issues related to equality of educational opportunity and the wastage of talent. More than a decade needed to pass before the data so clearly presented in this survey was to be interpreted as indicating sexual inequality as well as socio-economic inequality.

School Leavers in Australia 1971-72: Radford and Wilkes (1975)

In 1971-72, ACER repeated its earlier study on leavers (Radford and Wilkes, 1974) but this time a greater concentration was made on aspects of sex differences among leavers. The survey was entitled *School Leavers in Australia 1971-72*. Between April, 1971 and March 31, 1972, approximately 216,000 students left Australian schools. While the 1959-60 survey had covered some 80 per cent of leavers, the 1971-72 survey obtained data on only about 50 per cent of the estimated leavers. Radford and Wilkes therefore indicate that the information obtained cannot be regarded as applying to all leavers - only those in the sample. Notwithstanding, the sample of 110,000 leavers was considerable and more comprehensive than that in any recent study undertaken in Australia. Of the sampled leavers, 54,000 were girls, 56,000 were boys. About 60,500 were leavers from metropolitan schools.

Even in 1971, there was a paucity of data on school leavers in Australia. Radford and Wilkes (1975) ⁶ refer to the preparation by the then Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, in 1966 and subsequent years of a bulletin entitled *Survey of Leavers from Schools, Universities and Other Educational Institutions*. ⁷ While this bulletin gives details of the occupations of leavers and of their post-secondary education, it does not provide detailed information on other important aspects of school leavers. Twelve years after the initial stocktaking of what data on leavers were available in State departments of education, the authors could cite only five sources of data; they were the data collected in

South Australian government schools; a biennial study in the Australian Capital Territory undertaken by the Commonwealth Department of Education; special area studies in Victoria (six in 1963 and 1964); and studies of leavers in Ballarat (Victoria) undertaken by the Victorian Chapter of the Australian College of Education in 1970 and 1971. Radford and Wilkes (1975),⁸ therefore, felt justified in repeating the 1959-60 study.

Similar questions were investigated. At what age did students leave? The 15-year-olds formed the largest single group of leavers (30 per cent). Some 36 per cent of leavers were 17 and over; 14 per cent 18 and older; 27 per cent, 16 years old. It was clear that a higher percentage of males left at older ages than did females. This was true in all States for 18 year olds. Some 31 per cent of boys as against 28 per cent of girls left from the terminal year (Year 12). Students in metropolitan schools tended to be older when they left than those in non-metropolitan areas, that is there was a persistent trend towards higher retention rates in urban as distinct from rural environments. In all States the non-government schools displayed higher retentivity for both male and female leavers. However, in all States except Western Australia, higher proportions of females left at age fifteen in all school types. Again, almost 80 per cent of leavers stayed on until the end of the school year before leaving.

There were no significant differences between the sexes concerning time of leaving. There were marked sex differences however between the sexes in terms of estimated ability of early leavers. Higher percentages of girls who left at or before the end of Year 10 were rated by their teachers as being in the top third ability level. In terms of most of the occupations entered, more girls than boys were rated as being in the top third.

The destinations of all leavers who did not pursue post-secondary education were grouped by Radford and Wilkes as follows:

	Males %	Females %
1. Professional	14.3	18.1
2. Professional/Technical	8.1	8.3
3. Managerial	3.3	1.3
4. Clerical/Administrative	15.4	23.1
5. Sales/Clerical	9.2	13.4
6. Skilled Manual	9.7	2.6
7. Semi-skilled/Skilled	3.3	1.9
8. Unskilled/Semi-skilled	8.4	5.5
9. Unknown or not classifiable	28.3	25.8

The sex contrasts are most marked in clerical/administrative, sales/clerical and the semi-skilled and skilled categories. It is note-worthy that Radford and Wilkes made these sorts of comparisons, and made differences between male and female leavers a focus of their concluding statement on leavers. This reflects a significant shift in emphasis from the study undertaken twelve years previously. Strangely enough, however, Radford referred to these differences in occupational destination for males and females as 'natural'.

There were naturally enough differences between girls and boys in the occupations entered. ACER Newsletter, 1974. ⁹

The fact that there are different destinations for the sexes is accepted as a naturally occurring phenomenon. This statement is in strange contrast to the then burgeoning literature on sex-role socialisation and sex-role stereotyping, where occupational destination was seen as a complex interplay of societal expectations, intra-personal variables and opportunity structures. For the director of the nation wide research body in Australia to take this stance is an interesting index of the lack of insight shown in Australia, in research circles, to issues relating to the needs of female school leavers.

Of the leavers who were drawn to post-secondary education, more males than females went to universities (8.3 per cent vs 6.1 per cent). This sex difference was even more marked in metropolitan areas (10 per cent male, 7.4 per cent female) than in rural ones (5.1 per cent male, 4.5 per cent female). More females than males entered Colleges of Advanced Education to undertake teacher education courses. The ratio of females to males was approximately three to one.

The major urban/rural difference was in age of leaving. Some 40 per cent of metropolitan leavers were 17 years of age or more when they left compared with 31.5 per cent of non-metropolitan leavers. In rural areas, some 48 per cent of students left at 15 or earlier. The differences for the sexes were mainly in terms of overall destination after leaving.

Overall, more males than females left non-metropolitan areas than metropolitan ones (13 per cent vs 12 per cent). Of these non-metropolitan leavers over ten per cent went interstate - the boys into tertiary education, skilled trades, openings in semi-skilled and executive occupations; the girls into nursing, paramedical occupations and government employment.

In terms of school type differences, the ACER study indicated that at both ages 17 and 18 and over, the non-government schools had a higher percentage of retention for males than for females.

Boys :	Government 35.7 per cent	Non-government 59.1 per cent
Girls :	Government 28.8 per cent	Non-government 50.1 per cent

In both the government and non-government systems then, males were staying on longer than females.

Of particular interest in this study were the analyses dealing with the relationship between fathers' occupations and leavers' destinations. Of the students from professional homes, some

70 per cent went into professional and professional-technical vocations; of those from professional-technical homes, about 50 per cent went into similar occupations. Some 28 per cent of boys and 14 per cent of girl leavers with fathers in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations entered a similarly classified occupation. Radford and Wilkes argued that there was a strong tendency for leavers to enter destinations equivalent in rating to their fathers' occupations. There was a marked tendency for the professional group to maintain itself and this was true for both sons and daughters. There were some small indications of social shift (provided it was not an artifact of sampling bias). For example, in terms of entry to teachers' colleges and universities in the 1959-60 survey, 54 per cent of the fathers were in skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. Of their children, 37 per cent went to teachers' college and 21 per cent to universities. In the 1971-72 survey 49 per cent of fathers were in those skilled/unskilled categories, and 34 per cent of their children were in teachers' colleges (Now Colleges of Advanced Education), and 24 per cent were in universities. Whether this is a real difference will need to be monitored early in the next decade.

The Radford and Wilkes report is a very thorough and comprehensive survey of leavers, drawing sharp sex, regional and school type contrasts. Unfortunately, it does not attempt to deal with policy issues which could have significance for planning school retention strategies, access to post-secondary education, transition to work schemes and decentralisation possibilities. While acknowledging sex, regional and school type differences it assesses some of these to be:

.....intractable, e.g. differences between the sexes in the apparent attractiveness of trades and nursing, of labouring and clerical jobs, of rural and urban jobs. But some are not intractable, as for example the differences between the sexes in entry to universities and teachers colleges, ... 10

There seems to be a strange contradiction in this conclusion. Surely if options can be opened for girls in tertiary areas they can also be opened in technical and trade areas.

The gradual movement of males into nursing and to pre-school teaching is evidence that such a shift is possible. The view expressed by Radford and Wilkes seems to arise out of traditional stereotypes about males and females which obviously impinge on the analysis of their data.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO POVERTY : STUDIES ON SCHOOL LEAVERS

The Commission arranged two studies on aspects of the choice and opportunity facing school leavers. The first, undertaken by Knight (1977),¹¹ described the situation of female school leavers from an inner suburban girls high school in Melbourne, Victoria. The second, by McGaw, Warry, Varley and Alcorn (1977)¹² was a comparative study of school leavers in seven Queensland centres. Its focus was the educational and vocational aspirations and expectations of leavers with particular emphasis on the effects of a rural environment in determining students' life chances.

Factors Affecting School Leaving and Work Decisions for Girls:
Knight (1977)

Knight used an intensive case study approach within a single-sex school of high migrant density to examine the determinants of early female leaving. In addition, data were gathered concerning students' knowledge of the work world upon leaving school, subsequent job satisfaction, and, somewhat incongruously for this sample,

whether students were able to carry out their occupations with efficacy in company decision making or union affairs. Knight (1977). ¹³

School-related variables such as the interactions between teachers, students and neighbourhood were examined in relation to learning conditions and commitment to schooling. A particularly interesting dimension of the study was its concern with school ethos (history, organisation, reputation and expectations of school procedures) and how this was associated with early school leaving. Knight hypothesised that for this set of female students, a negative evaluation of the status of their school would be another source of information likely to lessen their self-esteem, feelings of competence, and expectations concerning work.

A sample of girls who had left school were contacted between 1972-1974. These leavers were interviewed and a retrospective case study approach used. This technique is not without its shortcomings since it relies on the accuracy of respondents' memories and their ability to sequence and interpret past events. A sample of 64 school 'stayers' were asked to complete a "school status" questionnaire. This was supplemented by individual interviewing. In drawing up a school profile, Knight pinpointed the factors which, in all probability, influence students to leave early. The school was a small non-academic single-sex school. It had inadequate science and mathematics facilities, thus narrowing the curriculum and therefore the career options of its students. Twenty-three nationalities were represented, although Italian and Greek students predominated over Lebanese, Egyptian, Maltese and Turkish. The school had been labelled by the community as a "spoiled image school", that is, a school with problem girls, truancy, poor facilities, limited curricula offerings, and a low academic profile.

In comparing stayers and leavers within the school, Knight was struck by the disproportionately low participation rate of migrant girls in the upper secondary levels, compared with Australian-born girls. Recent migrant arrivals were most prone to leave early, while migrant stayers had usually experienced secondary schooling in their country of origin. Some 89 per cent of school leavers left school in their third or fourth year. Intra year leavers comprised 37 per cent of the respondents in the sample. Time of leaving raises the important question of credit for school work successfully completed during that year. It has been argued (Hunt 1973)¹⁴ that the year-long syllabus structure operates against intra year leavers. Both he and Knight have recommended an independent term structure so that early

leavers can gain credit for completed work, and re-enter school at a later date to complete unfinished segments.

The school leaver samples when compared to the stayers, were failing academically and demonstrating a weak commitment to schooling. Both stayers and leavers, however, evaluated their school negatively in terms of their perception of the community labelling their school as a 'spoiled image' school. Extrapolating from students' attitudes towards their school, Knight suggested that the "spoiled image" label weakens the legitimacy and credibility of the school and hence its holding power over potential early leavers.

Of special interest were the reasons given by students for leaving early. More than one third of students were tired of school work and study; two fifths felt they had sufficient education for the job they wanted; about half wanted to be earning their own money. Somewhat surprisingly students did not cite limited academic ability as a reason for leaving early. Parents contributed to the school leaving decision, but generally students saw themselves as being responsible for their decision to leave. Some, however, were adversely affected by the need to have extra breadwinners in the family. Knight interpreted the decision to leave school early as showing a strong and independent tendency by students to be responsible for their own futures. An equally plausible interpretation could be that students, by rejecting school as boring and irrelevant, were really showing signs of powerlessness. They were not able to affect changes in the structure of their school or on the 'spoiled image' label given to their school. Was their rejection of schooling then a gesture of independence or was it a consequence of helplessness and powerlessness? Certainly their work options would be limited because of early leaving and Knight's interpretation smacks of the romantic rather than the realistic. In addition, there could be a hidden-curriculum of dual roles operating in the home with girls assuming domestic responsibilities and rejecting school because they could not cope with two jobs.

In terms of work knowledge, Knight found that about half the school leavers' felt that they had left school without the preparation they needed to enter the work force. It seemed that neither the primary nor secondary school curriculum had dealt in any systematic way with work knowledge. The transition from school to work was assisted by parental advice but not by advice from schools' staff. Generally leavers made their own initial job decision. The majority (56.5 per cent) of leavers entered semi-skilled occupations - shop assistants, packers, cashiers, machinists, cutters and seamstresses. One in three (32 per cent) entered clerical positions such as typing, filing and general clerical work. Over one in ten (11 per cent) were either engaged in home duties or unemployed. The concentration of female school leavers in this study in semi-skilled occupations is marked. Only one girl obtained a skilled job (key-punch operator) and only one entered an apprenticeship and that was stereotyped (hairdressing). As Knight (1977) commented:

Career plans.....for this early school leaver group of female students are restricted in choice and concentrated amongst clerical, shop assistant and assembly line jobs.¹⁵

The limitation of career choice for early female leavers was underlined in Knight's tracking of job shifts. Some 51 per cent of leavers remained in their first job after leaving school; 31 per cent were in their second job; while 14 per cent had had three or more jobs. Any "job shift" was to the same "job type" as that obtained in the initial selection phase. The prospects for upward occupational mobility did not appear favourable for these early female leavers. The process of initial job selection was, according to Knight, random and dictated by proximity and availability. This is different from the purposive decision making model of job choice available to many adolescents (see Poole 1977).¹⁶ Unfortunately Knight does not relate his study to any contemporary Australian studies which contrast the status of female leavers with that of male leavers. Nor did he endeavour to obtain contrasts in a single sex male school comparable in demographic characteristics. Consequently, it is not possible to judge whether the plight of early female leavers in this specific community context was significantly worse than that of their male counterparts. On the basis of Knight's study, one can only conclude that early female leavers in that 'spoiled image' school were at risk - in terms of limited credentials, job choice, and job mobility prospects.

By contrast, the stayers in Knight's sample aspired to professional and semi-professional careers, with only 4.9 per cent preferring home duties or non-work. Knight (1977) in fact perceived a marked difference in commitment to work among stayers and leavers:

There is reason to believe that for a large percentage of school leavers their present job is only temporary until marriage and/or home duties take precedence. Lack of job mobility and effective choice in career selection seem to indicate a strong reason for lack of career commitment from the early school leaver group. The school stayers, on the contrary, display a strong commitment to career aspirations. Young women who stay at school are able to keep their options and ambitions flexible towards personal careers.¹⁷

It is unfortunate that Knight did not explore this aspect with students in the interview situation or obtain some index of career commitment rather than extrapolating from work aspiration responses. Young women who stay at school are not necessarily able to keep their options open. In that school, in particular, with its inadequate mathematics and science facilities, with its short history of girls achieving the Higher School Certificate (HSC), career choices even for the stayers could have been seriously curtailed. Again Knight did not refer to any of the numerous Australian studies depicting the narrower tertiary options available to female students. His comments, therefore, concerning young women stayers keeping "their options and ambitions flexible towards personal careers" are somewhat unrealistic. Staying on as distinct from leaving per se is but one of a complex of critical determinants of the life choices of females. Knight is more insightful in his interpret-

ation of the marked differences between the aspirations and expectations of his sample:

Perhaps over the long term of a woman's potential work life there is not a meaningful future to be perceived. The cold, hard, realistic appraisal of the situation by the majority of these young women could indicate that they see no place for themselves in a changing work market where they would be competently engaged in meaningful work. 18

Again, however, Knight missed an excellent opportunity to gain information on this important issue from his respondents. Do female leavers see themselves as separated from the 'career tree' with its numerous branches and hierarchies? In this more recent study was there no perception of women's changing role in the workforce or any appreciation of the participation rate of women in the workforce before and after marriage?

The initial work experience of leavers was found to be enjoyable, providing as it did a sense of independence of earning power. Knight highlighted a very significant sex-biased economic discrepancy which his female leavers did not perceive, namely that junior females earn significantly lower wages than junior males and are often used as a continual pool of cheap labour. His leavers perceived their jobs as interesting and well paid. In addition, 81 per cent said they were not disadvantaged on the job because they were women. To whose social reality does the social scientist attribute legitimacy? Since only 40 per cent of the young female workers belonged to a union Knight assumes they were unaware of the politics of employment. Indeed, any attempt to engage his respondents in issue-related areas was evaded or misunderstood (Knight 1977).19

The original research questions of "whether students were able to carry out their occupations with efficacy in company decision making or union affairs" implies a sophisticated level of participation even for credentialled males in the Australian workforce. That Knight even considered he might find it among the females in his sample shows little contact with the work realities and politics of decision making in employment in Australia. (See for example Encel, MacKenzie and Tebbutt 1974²⁰), where the economic and political status of women in Australia is analysed.

The post-school educational plans of the female leavers in Knight's study were not ambitious:

Two students had enrolled at HSC level, and one student in an apprenticeship course. The balance were involved in short-term typing courses (six weeks to one term) or company insurance courses (three to six weeks), and one girl had completed a six-week receptionist course. Several.....intended to pursue further studies but had not started at the time of the interview. 21

The limitations, in terms of income potential and career options, of such post-school education are self evident. The vast majority of leavers (70 per cent) had not been involved in further education and did not plan to be. The significance of this for future occupational mobility is apparent.

Knight concluded with a number of recommendations for school reform, career flows and school re-entry. The recommendations reached beyond the concerns of his retrospective case study to include aspects of bicultural programs in the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, redemptive school discipline procedures and curriculum experiments relating directly to "the students" concern for increased options in academic competence, future career choice, decision-making participation and cultural and personal growth.

Amongst the recommendations, there are four which are excellent and could significantly enhance the life chances, not only of the girls in that school and community context, but of female leavers generally. They are, therefore, worth quoting verbatim:

- . The school needs to act as an ally and arrange alternative strategies to keep students eligible for school, while negotiating part-time or full-time work.
- . School curriculum must be designed to encourage maximum academic choice for students and to communicate high expectations of student ability.
- . Every student from primary through to secondary school must be given the knowledge, skill and experience to make her eligible for maximum career choice in a changing, technological, competitive and credentialled work world.
- . Government subsidies should be encouraged to employers offering time off for the young workers to participate in part-time study. 22

Prospects of School Leavers: McGaw et al (1977).²³

This study considers the prospects of rural leavers against that of their metropolitan counterparts. A very vivid description is given of rural environments, their settlement, demographic and economic patterns. The "deliberate, selective, purposeful process of relocation", of rural populations into urban ones is traced, not as a process of "drift" but as a systematic depletion of rural settlements. The emptying countryside can therefore be contrasted with the "coastal syndrome of dense urban cluster settlement patterns". A carefully documented account of the educational provision for students in rural areas is given, for example, "remote area" and "isolated children" allowance schemes are detailed. Evidence concerning the educational disadvantage of students in rural areas is discussed, particular reference being made to that provided by The Isolated Children's Parents' Association, the Senate Inquiry into the Education of Isolated Children and the Schools Commission Report for the Triennium 1977-78. The latter, for example, saw country children as requiring improved educational services to provide them with opportunities equal to those of children in urban centres. The Commission attached particular importance to the educational problems facing country students whom they categorised, along with girls, migrants and Aborigines, as an educationally disadvantaged group. The prospects for female rural leavers who were migrant or Aboriginal might therefore be perceived of as especially bleak.

The authors refer to the compounding influence of poverty, stressing that there has been little systematic investigation of the educational difficulties encountered by the poor in rural contexts in Australia. They do cite aspects referred to in the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission. The report, *Schools in Australia* 24 revealed educational disadvantage in selected major non-urban areas (as well as major urban) using three indicators of disadvantage: a socio-economic index, an index of ethnic language, and the incidence of Aborigines and a school catchment area. The extent of this problem was greater in rural Queensland. The McGaw et al (1977) 25 study, therefore, sought to investigate, in Queensland, the extent of educational disadvantage among adolescent school leaving age students in rural areas. Prior to relating their own investigation, they discuss specific educational problems faced by rural children:

- . distance: the more remote cannot attend school on a daily basis;
- . small communities: there are fewer educational facilities;
- . restricted social interactions: not only with peers but in terms of adult role models;
- . possible discontinuity between schooling and their future life: the population shift to urban areas may mean that the educational experience received in remote areas does not equip them for living in an urban society;
- . limited social, cultural and physical environment;
- . restricted school curricula: small enrolments limit options offered in secondary years and generalist teachers may not be able to teach with sufficient expertise in specialist areas.

The degree to which these factors operate for female students is not discussed. Nor is the issue raised in any of the studies cited by the authors under "the Australian context". The Verco and Whiteman (1970) 26 study in New South Wales was essentially a description of educational provisions in rural and urban settings within the rubric of educational opportunity, in which the sex-dimension was not singled out as being of critical importance. In Western Australia, McAtee and Zani (1975) 27 surveyed isolated children on a range of issues. However, a notable omission was the educational and occupational aspirations of male or female leavers.

McGaw et al comment that, despite the absence of empirical data on rural leavers in Australia there is no lack of speculation as to their plight:

The overriding theme of the speculation is readily identified - the educational and vocational aspirations of the vast majority of country students from poor families must inevitably be frustrated by a combination of poverty and environment. In the final outcome, aspirations will be lowered to coincide with

expectations, even if these expectations are fatalistic and negative. The greater the impact of poverty and the rural environment in a negative sense, the lower the expectations to which the aspirations are destined to coincide. (McGaw et al 1977). 28

The general aim of the McGaw et al study, therefore, was to investigate the extent of educational disadvantage among adolescents of secondary school leaving age in rural Queensland, compared with their metropolitan counterparts. The aspirations and expectations of students were compared with their social reality after an interval of nine months. Data were collected on four major dimensions: academic ability, attitudinal factors, educational and vocational aspirations and expectations, and socio-economic status. For the rural inland, provincial and suburban area comparisons, detailed information was supplied on demographic factors, economic features, educational provisions and on socio-cultural dimensions. It was possible, through the meticulously elaborated descriptions of the communities in which the students lived to apprehend the significance of the rural-urban dichotomy in education in Queensland and to begin to perceive the issues this would raise for school leavers.

The data collected on students include: their socio-economic status, their educational and vocational aspirations and expectations, their attitudes to school, their self-concept (teacher/school, physical appearance, interpersonal adequacy, autonomy, academic adequacy, physical adequacy, and emotions), their academic achievement (in humanities, social science, science and mathematics). The teachers of the students in the sample were asked to rate members of their classes on the following dimensions: ability, motivation to succeed, social role with other students, social contact with the teacher, truancy, living conditions and classroom behaviour. These teachers also supplied information about their age, sex, family, level of education, teaching experience, attitude towards their present school and its students, their environment and level of involvement in the local community.

Data on the communities involved were obtained from the 1971 Census, from direct observation and from interview. Indeed the interviewing was comprehensive and included key agencies and people who would be significant in the life of leavers, that is, school administrators, city or shire administrators, employers and business people, professionals (doctors, accountants), officers of the Commonwealth Employment Service, union representatives, Aboriginal representatives and ministers of religion.

Special consideration was given to the job opportunities available to school leavers. The following description of the job options available in four rural towns and two metropolitan centres, highlights the problems of rural leavers.

- . Charleville: There were few opportunities; many of the good positions (for example in government departments) are filled by people on short-term transfer. For boys, the key openings are in banks, agencies, the railways and the Council.

A few apprenticeships exist, and work is available on rural properties as jackeroos or in wool sheds, as piece pickers and board boys. For girls the opportunities include nursing, nurses-aide, office work, shop assistant, hairdresser, or telephonist (the last two are particularly popular but openings are few).

- . Cunnamulla: For boys of school leaving age, there are openings for a few office workers, in banks and agencies, a few apprenticeships are available, as well as labouring with the Council or on rural properties. For girls, a few positions exist in offices and shops, in hospitals (nurses-aide), in hotels (waitress), in milk bars, and in domestic service.
- . Hughenden: For boys, there are a few jobs in offices, as apprentices, and as labourers with the Council or on rural properties. For girls, even office work is limited; some become nurses-aides, shop assistants and barmaids.
- . Longreach: For boys, there is office employment in the courthouse, the banks, and in stock and station agencies. A few apprenticeships are available, plus labouring (Council, railway, rural properties and woolsheds). For girls, there is office work in the courthouse, agencies, banks and stores, training as a nurses-aide, shop assistant, barmaid or domestic service (occasionally hairdressing or telephonist vacancies occur).

McGaw et al comment that school leavers in these four rural towns have to compete with adults for job vacancies:

This appears to be particularly true of girls who often have to compete with married women for employment. Some employers are unwilling to train juniors when older workers they believe to be more reliable and responsible are available. In Hughenden, in particular, there appeared to be a reluctance to employ school leavers. (McGaw et al 1977). 29

This highlights a very real problem faced by school leavers, not only in rural areas, and possibly in metropolitan areas, and it has already generated some real debate. Faced with diminishing job opportunities during a time of structural unemployment, leavers may have to compete not just among themselves but with adults (who usually have some job experience behind them). The situation for girls is apparently worse than that for boys - again evidencing a sex-based differential operating in the opportunity structure of the job market.

What of the metropolitan centres? What jobs are available?

- . Corinda-Graceville: The white collar occupations, professional administrative and clerical, provide most of the jobs, there is an absence of employment in primary industry and an under-representation in manufacturing and blue collar jobs.
- . Woodridge: The jobs available are mainly in blue collar industries, especially manufacturing and construction. There is low representation in finance, public administration and community service jobs.

The diversity of jobs available in these metropolitan centres is in marked contrast to those available in the rural communities. It is unfortunate that no information is presented as to the sex distribution of job openings in these metropolitan suburbs.

What did the investigators find concerning the personal characteristics of the teachers? There was a slight preponderance of females in rural schools and of males in metropolitan ones. Schools in 'more desirable' centres were staffed by older teachers. The youth and inexperience of teachers in rural areas was marked.

Mc Gaw et al (1977) ³⁰ detail the attitudes of potential school leavers in the study. Although the overall mean self-concept of students was only slightly positive, no regional differences, sex differences or socio-economic differences were noted. Attitudes to school were slightly negative except in small secondary departments but no marked truancy patterns were in evidence. Teachers' ratings of students were by no means negative, their ratings of academic levels, however, were generally below average and it is worth considering whether teachers hold low expectations for many potential school leavers. Teachers generally did not ascribe high motivation to succeed to more than a third of all potential leavers. Where high motivation was ascribed, it was to students whose fathers were professionals or graziers. One positive aspect of the schooling of potential rural leavers is, the greater degree of social contact that the teachers share with their students. Achievement test scores in social science, mathematics and science indicated regional differences, the highest performance being recorded in a provincial city and a metropolitan suburb, the lowest in a rural high school.

When consideration was given to the educational aspirations of potential school leavers, significant differences emerged not only between the sexes and among the regions, but also according to socio-economic level. The educational aspirations of girls were markedly higher than those for boys, more girls aspired to tertiary education. Many such high aspirant females hoped to become teachers. Because of their particular research design, McGaw et al were able to demonstrate that the overall differences between the sexes did not vary from region to region or between socio-economic levels in any systematic way. The leavers with the highest average level of aspiration were metropolitan.

Only 25 per cent of students in the standard suburb wanted to leave school at the end of Grade 10 or on reaching school leaving age. In the satellite suburb, the figure was 39 per cent. In the two rural areas and the provincial city the figures ranged from 45 per cent to 51 per cent. Since most students reach school leaving age in their Grade ten year, it is clear that almost half of the students outside the metropolitan area propose to undertake no more education than was mandatory. (McGaw et al 1977) ³¹

A clear trend in the level of educational aspiration of non-metropolitan leavers emerged, they were lower; fewer non-metropolitan students wished to proceed beyond the level of education legally required. This was in sharp contrast to metropolitan leavers who aspired beyond upper secondary levels to tertiary levels.

Socio-economic levels were associated with aspiration levels - about half of the students whose fathers were professional men or graziers aspired to tertiary education, whereas about half of the students whose fathers were from the lower socio-economic strata wanted to leave school as soon as it was legally possible. Some leavers were perceived as being locked into their socio-economic level while others were seen to be aspiring beyond the level of their parents' education.

What of educational expectations? How did these compare with aspirations? The most sobering result was that there were no sex differences in patterns of expectations. That is to say, the expectations of girls were lower than their level of aspiration:

Girls wanted more education than they expected to get. The boys expected to get about what they wanted. The girls wanted to get to significantly higher levels than the boys wanted but both groups expected to reach about the level at which the boys were aiming. (McGaw et al 1977) ³²

There were no significant differences reported in this study between male and female leavers in their vocational plans. Metropolitan students generally had higher vocational expectations than those in rural locations. Leavers from higher socio-economic levels had high expectations but they showed the same urban-rural differentiation.

An analysis of vocational expectations also showed no sex differences: although the girls, in many cases, expected to get jobs of different types from those of the boys, there was no difference in status between the job that boys and girls expected to enter upon leaving school. (McGaw et al 1977) ³³

This conclusion differs from that of Knight who stresses that even within the same job classification the status of jobs differs because of the rate of pay. For example, a girl in unskilled domestic service on a farm would be paid less than an unskilled male farm hand. The apparent absence of sex differences in vocational expectations in the McGaw et al study may therefore need to be viewed with caution and circumspection.

There were, however, significant regional differences in the level of educational expectations. Students from metropolitan schools had higher expectations than students in non-metropolitan schools. Overall, however, students from higher socio-economic levels expected to receive more education than those from lower levels. The data indicated, in fact, that students from the highest socio-economic level actually expected to receive more education than they wanted and students from lower socio-economic categories expected less than they wanted.

Could it be, therefore, that socio-economic origin is more critical than the sex of the school leaver in determining length of schooling and access to tertiary education? Since the position of females may differ within class systems depending on class values and economics, perhaps the issue is less clear cut than this study suggests. McGaw et al. removed the effects of aspiration before performing their step-down regression and sex as a factor reached a probability of 0.06. It could be argued, therefore, that the sex dimension only marginally failed to reach the required level of significance. Further exploration of the effects of sex on expectations as distinct from aspirations seem justified.

Leavers, generally, were concerned about the inadequate provisions made for informing them about the range of job options. The agencies - Commonwealth Employment Service and guidance officers in the Department of Education - provided some guidance and information but this was generally done on an annual basis in country areas. Most leavers, in fact, obtained their job information from parents, other relatives and friends rather than formal Government sources.

The study revealed a particularly important factor in terms of job choice. Leavers in rural towns aspired to jobs in which they already knew people. Fewer than 20 per cent of leavers overall hoped to enter jobs outside the immediate experience of their acquaintances. This narrowing of possibilities is of concern not only because of the limits it places on personal choice and options, but also because the formal agencies are not being successful in widening the job horizons of leavers.

It could be that job vacancies exist in areas which would be attractive to some leavers, if they had appropriate support in contemplating jobs beyond their immediate experience. As well as job opportunities being a factor in leaver unemployment, lack of job knowledge and inadequate access to job opportunities are also factors mitigating against the vocational plans of leavers:

Means need to be found to provide an adequate vocational guidance service for both students and parents which will broaden their horizons and help them to make informed choices. (McGaw et al 1977) ³⁴

The leavers who were non-residents but attended residential schools in the non-government sector were also studied by McGaw et al. It was found that the socio-economic status of students attending non-government schools was higher than that for government schools. This difference was more marked in rural towns than in metropolitan locations e.g. the majority of students in country private boarding schools were the children of graziers. Students attending non-government schools had, on average, a considerably higher level of educational aspiration than did students in government schools, regardless of the region from which they came or their socio-economic level. Significantly more of these leavers aspired to tertiary education. Did educational expectations show a similar trend or were there notable differences? The analysis showed that the educational expectations of the students did reflect their aspirations.

The pattern of vocational aspirations and expectations, was also different for government and non-government students. Students attending government schools had, on average, a lower level of vocational expectation than did students in non-government schools. Unfortunately the analysis of non-resident leavers in government and non-government schools did not contain a sex comparison.

A strength of the McGaw et al (1977) ³⁵ study was that it followed up some 385 of the students (questionnaires were sent to the original 607 subjects but only 70 per cent of females responded and 58 per cent males). Of the 385 students, 272 were still at school, 84 were working and 29 were seeking employment. More students in metropolitan schools stayed on than left, only half of the school leavers were satisfied with their present activity, yet only five of the 47 who were dissatisfied wished to return to school. Most wished to secure employment or change their present job.

Overall most students attached considerable importance to the availability of a wider range of subjects as a means of improving education. Of the respondents who had left school, 75 were in their first full-time job, while eight had experience of more than one. The job options of these leavers who have left in Grades 9 or 10 (Years 9 and 10) were limited and showed a distinct weighting towards the skilled and semi-skilled levels. Of the 17 in clerical jobs only four were males. Of the 22 in skilled manual, all were males. Only four of the 20 leavers in unskilled manual were female (nurses-aides and waitresses). Boys predominated in the skilled and unskilled categories, girls in the clerical and semi-skilled. On the basis of this 'reality' it is questionable whether McGaw et al's earlier conclusion concerning no differences in the status of jobs among the sexes is tenable. Unavailability of suitable jobs was seen by leavers who could not obtain work as the major reason for their failure to secure employment. The majority of school leavers were still living with their parents or guardians. Twenty-two of the school leavers were undertaking part-time study (17 were employed, six were not). Some 18 school leavers said their study related to the job they held or hoped to secure. It seemed that more students stayed on at school than left in previous years because of economic factors.

McGaw et al made four major recommendations to obviate the educational disadvantage operating in rural areas:

that the Department of Education should establish, on trial, good residential facilities in association with rural high schools (to prevent the rural brain-drain);

that the Department of Education should introduce salary, status and/or promotion incentives to attract mature and experienced teachers to rural high schools;

that the Department of Education Guidance Branch and the Commonwealth Employment Service should actively encourage joint counselling sessions with parents and children about job opportunities both in rural areas and beyond;

that work experience programs, involving opportunities for experience outside the limited range of jobs in rural towns, should be developed for students of leaving age in rural towns. (McGaw et al 1977) 36

This study of potential and actual leavers had an overall orientation towards rural and socio-economic disadvantage as factors affecting the life chances of students. Although key sex differences in leaving prospects were reported, this dimension of school leaving was somewhat underplayed.

SUMMARY

The national studies of school leavers undertaken by ACER revealed a number of important social demographic trends which influence school leaving patterns. First, there were marked sex differences in retention rates, with more males than females staying within the school system. Secondly, there were clear school type differences in retentivity, with secondary students in non-government schools being less likely to leave early. Thirdly, and doubtless partly related to type of school attended, students from high socio-economic families were more likely to complete all years of secondary schooling, and finally, the school leaver in non-metropolitan areas was disadvantaged compared with his/her urban counterpart. The socio-economic and urban/rural differences were highlighted more in the ACER studies than were sex differences. In all probability, the sex dimension could be vitiated or exacerbated depending on socio-economic origin, locale, and type of school attended. Such a matrix of factors needs to be considered, therefore, before any forward thinking programs can be devised to assist female leavers in achieving equality of educational opportunity.

The first of the studies on leavers for the Commission of Enquiry into Poverty by Knight (1977) 37 raised a number of important new dimensions to the issues concerning early female leaving. The first concerned migrant origin and the degree to which this is a factor in early leaving. The analysis by Knight of school-based factors and their relationship to the leaving decision is particularly fruitful, especially the concept of

'spoiled image school' and how this might increase the likelihood of early leaving. The second strength of this study was its investigation of the jobs leavers obtained and the degree of satisfaction experienced by them. Rich cameos of the limited options facing female leavers emerge from the study. Even the options of female stayers in that community setting do not appear exceptionally bright, despite Knight's optimism, if cognizance is given to the broader social context of females in the Australian workforce. This study contains a number of useful recommendations for improving the schooling and career options of early female leavers.

The McGaw et al (1977) ³⁸ study illuminated the rural/urban differences in the prospects and problems facing school leavers. This rich contextual analysis further showed the relative disadvantage of female leavers in rural settings, particularly in terms of job options and job selection. Confirmatory evidence of the pervasive influence of social class and school type on the educational and vocational aspirations and expectations of school leavers was supplied. One of the most significant and telling findings was that girls wanted more education than they expected to obtain. This was not the case with boys who expected to reach the level at which they were aiming. Of added interest was the finding that students from the highest socio-economic levels actually expected to receive more education than they wanted. McGaw et al in their study provide insight into factors influencing school leaving which reach beyond the sex dimension in isolation. Clearly their study indicates the necessity for considering the school leaving phenomenon in a demographic grid which encompasses social class, family values and aspirations, influence of school type, environmental resources and opportunities (the rural-urban contrasts). It is unfortunate that so few migrants or Aborigines were in the school leaver sample of this study as the methodology used by McGaw et al has potential for illuminating the relative significance of these variables in the school leaving decision.

PART II

SCHOOL LEAVERS:
NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES

CHAPTER 5

OTHER MAJOR STUDIES ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Compared with the number of studies undertaken in the United States of America and in England, few studies in Australia have been concerned with dropouts or with 'early leavers'. The major thrusts of the past decades have been raising the statutory leaving age and establishing adequate educational provisions for those who stay on at school. The need for extra provisions was exacerbated not only by increased retentivity but also by demographic trends (see, for example, Sheehan, 1973).¹ With a rise in school leaving age and an increased social commitment to education as an avenue for equalising educational opportunity, the concern seems not to have been with those who left early but rather with those who were staying on. In Australia over the past few decades there has been a general tendency for students to stay on at school beyond the post-compulsory school age-levels. A somewhat different emphasis was evident in tertiary educational research. Here, there was a marked concern with educational wastage, dropouts and unfulfilled potential. (For example, Sheldrake (1975)²; Schonell et al (1962)³; Selby Smith (1969)⁴.

There have been a few small-scale studies on early leavers in the school system in Australia, but there has been only one national study. This national study was actually a derivative of a study undertaken by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (I.E.A.) rather than being planned specifically as a study on early leavers. It is the most significant study to date on early leaving in Australia, particularly as it incorporates sex differences as one of its major dimensions. It is important to note however that the information on which the analysis is based was obtained by testing a national sample of students who were 14 years old in 1970 and again when they were 16 years old in 1972. The matters which concern us in 1978 are different from those of 1972. Also as discussed in Chapter Two, significant changes have occurred in the relative retention rates of males and females. The study is discussed below, along with those few studies which have focussed specifically on early leavers.

Early School Leavers in Australia - Rosier (1978) ⁵

The aim of this study was to investigate retentivity ('the percentage of young persons at a given age-level in the population who remain at school') at age 16 in Australia, and to examine the special characteristics differentiating those who left school from those who remained.

The basic criterion for this national study was the decision at age 16 to terminate schooling. Rosier placed no value judgement on the school leaving decision:

The decision to remain at school was not regarded as being better or worse than the decision to leave. At the same time it was realised that the range of options for career opportunities associated with

further education was greater for those who remained at school at age 16.

His specific research questions were:

- . What are the important environmental and personal factors which differentiate between the 16-year-old Australian students who stay on and the leavers?
- . What relationship exists between these personal and environmental factors?
- . To what extent do these factors differ between males and females?
- . To what extent do the effects differ across the six States?

The study was sub-titled *Family, School and Personal Determinants of the Decision of 16-year-old Australians to Remain at School or to Leave*. Approximately half of all 16-year-olds remained at school, or did in 1972, the year from which the sample was drawn.

Rosier's study is particularly important in the Australian context of research on the leaving phenomenon. It is the most comprehensive study undertaken of its kind and is notable for the sophistication of its methodology and research design. The data were analysed in terms of family and school environment and school related personal characteristics, all of which were conceived of as having a causal relationship to the decision to leave school. The variables within each of these major areas were analysed using Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) and interaction between the areas estimated by path analysis.

Since, relatively little work has been done in Australia to identify the important factors associated with the school termination decision, Rosier developed what he called an exploratory approach in collecting information about a comprehensive set of potentially significant factors, anticipating discarding factors which showed minimal effects. The major limitations of the study were recognised by Rosier himself:

The study dealt with an important decision at a particular point in a young person's life, but did not deal with his evaluation of that decision, nor with its consequences.

There was little examination of stated reasons for the decision, nor was there any attempt to assess the degree of consciousness of purposiveness of the decision.

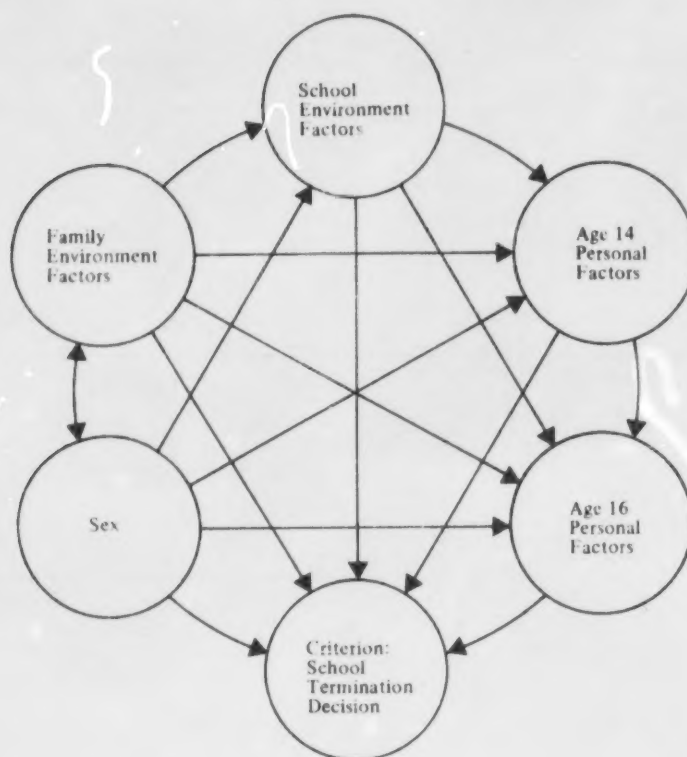
(Rosier 1978) ⁶

A constraint to the conceptualisation was the need to retain a simple structure from which a causal model could be derived and tested. A decision to use 'blocks' of explanatory factors was taken, where each block contained a set of related factors occupying the same state in a temporal sequence. The four blocks arranged in sequence were: family environment factors, school environment factors, age-14 personal factors, and age-16 personal factors. In this design, later blocks are causally dependent on earlier ones. Sex as a factor in the leaving decision was included in the conceptual framework at the earliest point in the temporal sequence, to determine its particular

contribution to the school leaving decision. This was a major advance on previous Australian research on sex differentials in leaving patterns. State differences were examined by conducting the analyses separately for each State. The conceptual framework for Rosier's study is shown in Figure 5.1

FIGURE 5.1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ROSIER'S STUDY



Source: Rosier M. *Early School Leavers in Australia*. 1978.

The dimensions of the conceptual framework for Rosier's study are:

Criterion - the criterion for this study was the school termination decision of a 16 year old defined by the action of staying at school or leaving.

Sex - was placed at the earliest stage in the temporal sequence having a causal effect on the later components in the conceptual framework. Sex was considered to be non-causally associated with the block of family environment factors.

Family environment factors - these included parents, siblings, especially older ones who had already decided to remain at school or to leave, and relatives.

The mechanism through which the family environment was considered to exert its influence on a young person's career decision was by regarding the members of this environment as 'significant others' for the young person. (Rosier 1978)⁷

Such influences were conceived of in two ways: a passive or structural level (career models for adolescents to think about); and an active or functional level (attitudes and activities which impinge on career decisions).

School environment factors were defined as school staff and fellow-students at the school attended. Teachers could be passive role models ('a teacher') or "active", by providing anything from information to individual counselling in careers. Fellow students likewise served as active or passive role models. A value for each factor was assigned to a given school and to each student in that school as a measure of school milieu.

Age 14 personal factors - the 14 year old is viewed in this study as being in search of a personal identity which is partly constructed through the influence of family and school environments. These influences are internalised and enter into the development of personal characteristics. Achievement and attitudinal factors were seen as important personal characteristics, especially in an initial phase of self-testing for a realistic range of career options. (Rosier's stress on attitudinal dimensions, rather than achievement in isolation, is another significant advance towards refining our understanding of the contribution of school factors to leaving and/or career choice.

Age 16 personal factors - by 16, students can legally leave school. By this time, therefore, there should be greater congruence between an adolescent's perception of his/her personal characteristics associated with the learning processes of the school and incorporated changes over the preceding two years.

It was assumed that the personal factors at ages 14 and 16 were influenced by family and school environment factors and that these blocks were operative in the school leaving decision.

The instruments used to obtain data from which variables could be constructed to measure concepts represented in each block were developed by I.E.A. in cooperation with the National Technical Officer for I.E.A. in Australia (Rosier). All data were collected by means of tests and questionnaires:

1970 Measuring Instruments

- Science Test (see Comber & Keeves, 1973)⁸
- Word Knowledge Test (see Thorndike, 1973)⁹
- General Questionnaire, eliciting information on home, age, sex, school course, expected education and occupation, father's occupation, parents' education, siblings, parents' interest in school work.
- General Opinion Questionnaire, measuring attitudes to school, whether doing well at school was important, and attitudes to staff.

1972 Measuring Instruments

Separate sets of instruments were prepared for students and leavers, for example, 1972 Student Book was administered to students at school while the 1972 Career Questionnaire was posted to leavers. Slight changes in wording and format were deemed necessary.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| • Student Book | - General Questionnaire |
| | - Activities Inventory |
| | - Self-esteem Inventory |
| • Career Questionnaire | - General Questionnaire |
| | - Activities Inventory |
| | - Self-esteem Inventory |
| • School Questionnaire | - Completed by school principals (only item used in present study was number of male and female students enrolled at school in 1972) |

The sample (1970) was designed as a two-stage stratified probability sample with a constant overall sampling fraction within each State. The first stage of sampling involved the selection of a school with a probability proportional to the number of students in the target population at that school. The second stage required the selection at random of a cluster of 25 students from the target population for that school: such a procedure enabled the results to be generalized to all individuals in the target population for the State.

The analysis strategy was to regard the samples from each of the six States as separate replications of the same basic survey. It would have been interesting if the same strategy had been used with the sex dimension. This would have considerable theoretical

support since the literature on theories of career choice increasingly stress the need to apply different models to each of the sexes. If Rosier had used separate replications of the same basic survey, he might have thrown considerable light on whether or not career and school leaving models are markedly different for males and females. Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA), which examines inter-relationships among several explanatory variables and a dependent variable within the context of an additive model, was used in this first analysis phase, namely the State replications.

On the basis of both major overseas studies and Australian studies, Rosier anticipated that family environment factors would be most important in the school leaving decision which showed relationships between structural variables measuring home background and outcomes associated with career decisions, including school retentivity and occupational choice. Bachman et al 1971¹⁰, Morton-Williams and Finch 1968¹¹, Connell 1977¹². The factor variables were:

- . Socio-economic level; is a measure of basic structural characteristics of the family environment, such as occupation of father and education of parents;
- . Home literacy level; is a measure of cultural and intellectual milieu and included a number of books in home and dictionary usage;
- . Parent interest; included whether parents corrected student's speech, checked spelling, encouraged reading and asked about school work (measure of parental concern with school-related activities of children);
- . Family size;
- . Language of the home; extent to which English was the language spoken at home.

The results indicated that overall socio-economic level was the most important variable relating to school leaving decisions. The home literacy level and parent interest in the school were positively associated with the decision to stay at school. However, none of the factors analysed made a large contribution to the explanation of variability in adolescents' termination decisions. Some indication of sex differences was apparent: retention was higher for male students than for female students in each State in contrast to the present situation; female students tended to have higher ratings on the basic family environment factors. When these factors were held constant, the effects on retention of differences between the sexes increased. Rosier adds, however, that the contribution made by the sex of a young person to the explanation of the decision to leave school was not great.

Turning next to school environment factors, Rosier again expected, on the basis of a major overseas study Bain and Anderson (1974)¹³, to obtain an association with school factors and termination decisions. Bain and Anderson, found positive relationships between the social class composition of schools and students' plans to attend college. Radford and Wilkes (1975)¹⁴, in

Australia, found that students at government schools were more likely to leave at age 16 from non-metropolitan schools than from metropolitan schools. The block of school environment variables include:

- . School type; categorised as government, non-government, metropolitan and non-metropolitan. (Non-government included Catholic and non-Catholic).
- . Student body socio-economic level; a measure of the socio-cultural milieu of a school obtained from three categories (high, medium, low) of school socio-economic status. This was a surrogate variable for a range of unmeasured school characteristics (for example quality of teaching staff, physical resources of the school, extra curricula activities).
- . Sex composition of a school; this could be one of three categories male students only, female students only or male and female students.
- . Student body expected education; general level of education expected by the students at school.
- . Student body achievement; provided a measure of the students' science knowledge and verbal ability at age 14 in 1970.

The results indicated that retentivity was higher for non-government schools, especially in metropolitan areas. Student body socio-economic level was strongly associated with school-type and there was a fairly strong positive relationship with retentivity. As for sex patterns, retentivity was again higher for males than for females. When school type and student body SES level were held constant, this difference was increased, that is sex differences in retentivity are associated with school environment factors. Knowledge of the sex composition of the school explained little variability in the decision of 16 year olds to leave school, but retention rates were higher in single-sex schools than in mixed schools. In Victoria and Queensland, male and female single-sex schools had similar retentivity rates. In South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, male single-sex schools had higher retentivity. The overall effect of sex of schools on retentivity was not high (although single-sex schools had higher retentivity). The level of education expected by the student body was strongly associated with retentivity. The student body achievement variable, in contrast, showed only a very low positive association with retentivity. Type of school was, overall, more associated with retentivity.

Consideration was then given to the block of 'Age-14 Personal Factors' associated with schooling. The component factors were:

- . Achievement; scores on 1970 Science and Word Knowledge Tests (to represent two major aspects of the school curriculum);

- . Academic application; is a measure of the present commitment to education as indicated by the degree of seriousness attached to school work (concentration on lessons, hard and serious work, not leaving homework to the last minute and avoiding misbehaving in school);
- . Expected education; commitment to future education;
- . Educational aspirations; is a measure of the perceived importance of education and of intrinsic value of education (for example wanting more education, regarding doing well at school as important, and not regarding school as a waste of time).

The results suggested that personal characteristics, linked with participation in teaching and learning activities in school, complemented the more indirect influences of significant others in the family and school environmental blocks of factors. Each of the age-14 factors was positively associated with the school leaving decision, the association being stronger than that for family or school environment factors. Commitment to future education was the factor most strongly associated with retentivity. The next most influential factors were achievement and the perceived importance of education. An adolescent's general attitude to school, as indicated by his liking for school, was also positively associated with the tendency to remain at school. The effects of sex on the decision to leave school were essentially independent of the four basic personal factors at age 14.

Rosier's results are particularly interesting in that they suggest that intra-personal factors may be more important than structural factors such as family and school environments. To this extent, the results are more in line with the emphases stressed by social psychologists in assessing schooling and career aspirations, rather than those stressed by sociologists (the structural aspects of class and status) or educationalists (the importance of schooling on aspirations and life chances). Increasingly, though, sociologists within Australia are moving towards phenomenological and ethnomethodological approaches which place more emphasis on an individual construction of social reality. The application of this sort of approach for a study of factors influencing school leaving decisions would seem justified.

By age 16 it was anticipated that adolescents would have developed more realistic career plans to match the increased awareness of their own capacities. The age 16 personal factors Rosier considered were:

- . Continue education; this variable was designed to measure the commitment to future education by students and leavers;
- . Academic self rating; was designed to measure the perceived importance of education;
- . General attitude to school; student behaviour in the classroom as a measure of satisfaction with schooling and good behaviour was considered to indicate congruence between aims and activities of the school and the expectations of students;

- . Self-esteem; this reflects a liking and respect for oneself and an ability to estimate one's worth on a realistic basis.
- . Activities (social and humanistic); the range and kind of activities. Adolescents who participated in a limited range of activities might have less experience of people and occupations. Some activities might be associated with the educational process. 'Humanistic' activities (reflecting intrinsic educational values) were more likely to be associated with staying on at school.

For this analysis, the age 16 factors and the sex of an adolescent together contributed to the explanation of variation in the decision to leave school. Commitment to future education and the perceived importance of education were both positively associated with retentivity. No strong associations with retentivity were found for self-esteem or activities engaged in. The difference in retentivity between males and females was essentially independent of the two basic factors ('continued education' and 'academic self-rating'). When participation in humanistic activities was added to these factors, the sex factor was more prominent. It should be noted that females were higher on participation in humanistic activities.

After investigating the effects of each of the four major data blocks on the school leaving decision, Rosier concluded with an examination of a causal model which included all four data blocks, so that the strength of their direct and indirect effects on the decision to leave school could be estimated. The sex variable was also included in the causal model.

Age 14 personal factors had the strongest direct effect on retentivity. The other factors in order of direct effect were Age 16 personal, School Environment and Family Environment. The influence of sex on the decision to leave showed a weak and negative path. This was consistent with the MCA analyses which indicated that the mean retentivity was higher for males than for females. Interestingly, the path of Family Environment to the criterion was the weakest of the direct paths. There was a strong path from Family Environment to School Environment. Sex had a moderate positive path to School Environment, demonstrating that females tended to have higher scores on this variable. The direct path from School Environment to retentivity was generally weak. The direct path from age 16 to the decision to leave was moderate. The path from age 14 personal to age 16 personal factors was strong, but all the other direct paths to age 16 personal factors were weak. Age 14 personal variables, which had the strongest association with retentivity, were largely influenced by the Family Environment factors. Although the sex of an adolescent and his/her family environment had a moderate influence on the school environment, these effects were transmitted only weakly to the subsequent factors and to retentivity. Personal characteristics at age 16 were largely influenced by age 14 personal factors.

Using revised causal models for the six States, Rosier found that the effect of Sex varied across the States. The positive associations between Sex and Family Environments in three States

(New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia) indicated that females tended to obtain higher scores on Family Environment factors. There were also moderate positive paths from Sex to School Environment in three States (Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania) suggesting a higher valuation of schooling by females in those States. Weak to moderate negative paths between Sex and age 14 personal variables were identified in Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, indicating that females there obtained lower values on the age 14 personal variables. Only in three States (New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania) were direct paths obtained from sex to retentivity. These results were consistent with earlier MCA ones which showed that levels of retentivity differed for males and females. The two States with the highest difference between males and females (in population retentivity) were South Australia (9.7 per cent) and New South Wales (9.6 per cent). For the sample retentivity, however, the two States were South Australia (10 per cent) and Tasmania (8.7 per cent). Overall, in the revised models, sex differences were strongest for South Australia where sex was linked to every other variable block in the model. The influence of sex was low in Victoria and Western Australia which had smaller sex differences in retentivity. Overall, there were no differences between the revised models which were associated with State differences in retentivity, except where Family Environment influences were more significant on age 14 personal characteristics in the lower retentivity States.

After presenting a resume of his major findings, Rosier briefly considered the implications of his leavers study for educational policies. Two types of implication were considered:

- . What are the probable effects on school systems of increasing the proportion of 16 year old persons who remain at school (especially due to increasing levels of youth unemployment)?
- . On what factors should attention be focused in order to increase retentivity for 16 year olds?

One of the important observed differences (and this was apparent in the Radford and Wilkes (1975)¹⁵ study also) was the increased retention within the system of more students from a lower socio-economic background. Similarly, the ethnic composition of retention figures would suggest a higher level of retentivity, compared with Australia, once allowance was made for Family Environment factors. The higher aspirations of students from homes where English is not the only language need to be met, as do the aspirations of students from lower socio-economic homes. Retentivity by school type needs monitoring:

To the extent that it is undesirable for differences between schools to be based on socio-economic factors, educational policies should be developed which would, in time, reduce differences based on these factors. (Rosier 1978)

Despite the fact that the mean retentivity levels were higher for males than for females, these sex differences were only marginally associated with the factors examined in this study. This suggests that there would be no marked effects on educational

systems due to differential changes in school retention levels for males and females.

If retentivity increased further, there would be an increase in the number of students remaining at school with lower achievement, lower commitment (to present schooling and further education) and a lower perception of the importance of education. New programs would need to be devised for such students to engage them sufficiently in education. The converse is that many problems (for example behavioural) which confront teachers today might be solved by decreasing the level of retentivity, so that 'reluctant learners' and others would not be locked into the educational system. It could also be said that:

If more students decide to stay on it would probably be because their estimates of the value of education had increased.

Bennett (1978).¹⁷

Indeed Rosier's figures show that States with high 'educational aspirations' do have high retention rates.

Since the personal factors at age 14 had the strongest direct effect on retentivity, policies designed to build upon personal attributes would probably be most efficacious in encouraging school-related commitment, especially if this was accompanied by an enhanced perception of the importance of education. Development of more positive attitudes to school at age 16 might increase retentivity also. Finally, parental interest in achievement and attitudes at age 14 might increase the likelihood of students continuing their education.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this study is that none of the key factors - home background, school environment or student achievement and attitudes - explained any of the sex differences in the study. In a press release from the Australian Council for Educational Research on Rosier's early leavers study (ACER Press Release, June 1978)¹⁸ there was a statement to the effect that the differences in the proportion of girls and boys staying on at school (more boys than girls) was probably due to general community attitudes to the education of girls. That this might be so is cause for concern. That Rosier does not propose major policy recommendations to redress this imbalance and/or to change home and school (and community) attitudes to the education of girls is somewhat disappointing in a study of such statistical elegance and methodological sophistication. However since this study began the Schools Commission has published *Girls, School and Society* which does contain recommendations for action.

That socio-economic status is the key factor in explaining why many 16 year olds leave school highlights one form of social inequality in Australia. Yet at the same time it glosses over another - the sex differential. It is also surprising that the State differences, which were so laboriously obtained in countless replications, were not discussed more fully and some policy issues at a State level considered. The issue of early leaving was not discussed and in fact no value judgements were placed on the decision to leave at age 16. To that extent the study is more an analytic exploration of six data sets to test a

conceptual framework rather than a study concerned with understanding the phenomenon of early school leaving.

The degree to which the sample was appropriate for sex comparisons is worth consideration. The IEA Science Achievement Project sample, although obtained from a comprehensive sampling framework, may well have under-represented females. In addition, it is unfortunate that Rosier did not calculate separate replication for males and females in the same way that he did for the six States. It is somewhat disquietening that the most recently published and major study of early leavers in Australia finds, in repeated analyses, that the proportion of girls staying at school is lower than the proportion of boys but, after endless multivariate analyses, can offer no explanation for these differences other than to say that home background, school environment, and student achievement and attitude do not explain the difference.

Another perspective on the usefulness of Rosier's study is presented by Bennett (1978)¹⁹ who reviewed the study in terms of its readership and general value, and within this framework, judged it to be severely limited in both aspects:

In the first place much of the language is so technical that it could be understood only by people trained in educational research and not by all of them. (Bennett, 1978)²⁰

Bennett qualified his comment with the request that the results of all educational research be translated into a form in which they can be understood by those interested. Another issue he raised is the length of time taken to prepare and publish the report. He recognises that the questions relevant to school leavers now, are necessarily different to those relevant to school leavers in 1972.

Bennett's major criticisms, however, were more fundamental - how should the results be interpreted, and exactly what is their significance? He noted that Rosier summarised the findings of his research in three pages and discussed the implications for educational policies in four pages. Within these seven pages there was only scant information that was not already well known. With respect to implications for educational policies, Bennett considered that the methods used for analysis tend to render such interpretations hazardous. Similarly:

...the relationships between the factors - mathematical relationships between the numbers - cannot be translated into statements about causes and effects or about what actually influenced people's decisions. (Bennett, 1978)²¹

Finally Bennett draws attention to the fact that:

Since this study was first planned, attacks on the assumptions underlying much social research have intensified.

Bennett asserts that the value of what might be called traditional research is being questioned. Researchers in the future will have to take account of this view.

Finally it is important to look beyond retention rates when looking at the school leaving decision of females, it may be that specific home, school and community factors are operating in ways that mitigate against the attainment of equal opportunity by girls at school or at work. Retention rates as such may be an inadequate index of the opportunity tracks along which female leavers, especially early female leavers, can proceed.

Identifying Early School Leaving Poole (1978)

The next major study on early leavers was undertaken by Poole (1978).²² This study examined some of the major variables associated with early leaving. Using a matched sample of 'stayers' and 'leavers', Poole was interested to ask 'Why do students leave school early? Do they choose to leave or has the school, in a sorting and selecting process, culled them out?' Starting with a known group of leavers, two issues were explored: the reasons for early leaving, and the significant characteristics which distinguish school leavers from a matched sample of school stayers. Furthermore, with the matched sample of 'stayers' and 'leavers', Poole, using multivariate procedures, set out to determine whether early leaving could be predicted on the basis of selected discriminating variables, and the degree of certainty of such predictions. Ideally, such a prediction formula should be applied in an attempt to make actual predictions early in the school career of a similar age cohort and to test these predictions against actual outcomes, otherwise the total process of identifying early school leavers becomes somewhat academic.

The subjects for the study were selected by a three-stage sampling procedure. The first stage defined the population to be sampled as all students born in 1958 and attending Melbourne metropolitan secondary schools teaching more than 30 students born in that year. The 295 schools meeting these criteria were then stratified according to the sex composition of the students and socio-economic ranking of the location. A sub-sample of ten per cent was chosen from this stratified sample, this being a proportion manageable in practical terms and yet sufficient in size to permit the application of multivariate procedures. The second stage of the sampling involved selecting twenty-five students at random from each of the schools (N = 797). These 797 students represented approximately 18 per cent of all 14 year olds enrolled in 1972 in Melbourne schools - government high and technical schools and non-government, fee-charging schools, both religious and non-religious. The third stage of the sampling involved recording the school leaving of students during the period under investigation, (November 1972 to August 1974). In that period, 121 students left school. This group was called the Total Early Leavers. A group of 121 school stayers, matched with the Total Early Leavers on the basis of IQ (measured by ACER Higher Abilities Test), father's occupation (Lancaster-Jones scale) and sex, was chosen from the total sample of school stayers as the comparison group.

Descriptive statistics on the Total Early Leavers indicated that the majority were 15 years of age, fewer than half had completed

Form 4 (Year 10), that there was no apparent sex bias, and that there was a higher rate of leaving in government schools than in non-government. Inventories were used to obtain measures in a number of areas, e.g. intellectual, attitudinal, vocational, personality. The data were collected by a team of researchers engaged in the La Trobe 15-18 Year Old Project. Basically a closed questionnaire format was used with full response categories in order to form the basis of a Likert-type scale. The ACER Higher Abilities Test was employed as a measure of intellectual ability; the Junior Eysenck Personality Inventory was used as a measure of introversion/extraversion and neuroticism; the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory provided a self-esteem rating, and the Aberdeen Academic Achievement Motivation Inventory yielded a measure of aspiration, work habits and a determination to do well at school work (Entwistle, 1968.)²³ Additional data were obtained from the Total Early Leavers using mailed questionnaires and individual interview schedules. The concern of this research was (a) to determine the reasons advanced for early school leaving; (b) to compare a matched group of stayers and leavers on educationally relevant criteria (after controlling for IQ, socio-economic status and sex); and (c) to select, using discriminant function analysis, the best linear aggregate of variables differentiating stayers and leavers. This latter procedure enables a set of classification functions to be derived which permit the classification of new cases with unknown membership, that is predicting the likely leavers and the likely stayers in a school population.

What did the results indicate? Firstly, why do early leavers leave school? The three major reasons for leaving reported in the questionnaire and interview data were dislike of, or disinterest in school; irrelevance of more schooling in terms of occupational plans; and the inability to try or unwillingness to try to cope with more schooling. Financial problems, influence of friends or direct parental or school pressure were important in only a few cases.

The interview data revealed that, in the majority of cases, more than one reason for leaving was the rule rather than the exception. Nevertheless, on the perceived strength of leaving orientation, three distinct types of leavers were discerned:

- . Job-oriented Early Leavers; those students who wanted to start work or vocational training (e.g. apprentices, girls in secretarial jobs),
- . School-failed Early Leavers; those early leavers who could not cope with school work, recurrent labelling as a failure, and a negative picture of themselves in a school setting,
- . School-disenchanted Early Leavers; those students who gave boredom and irrelevance as reasons for leaving.

The early leaver can best be described, however, as a combination of the above types. There were, for example, leavers who wanted to work for various reasons and who had negative attitudes towards school; there were leavers who described having problems coping and who had negative attitudes to school; there were leavers who wanted to go out to work because school had labelled them as failures.

What were the key features differentiating early leavers and stayers? Cross-tabulations were computed on the responses of the matched leavers and stayers to questions concerning aspirations and expectations (educational and vocational), academic performance, additional statements (value orientations), and personality characteristics. In the area of value orientations and personality, the leavers and stayers were, with a few notable exceptions, remarkably similar. The differences between the leavers and stayers were considered under two broad areas: home factors and school factors. Among the home factors operating, one significant difference between the matched groups of stayers and leavers was in their perceptions of their parents' job aspirations for them.

Parents of stayers aspired to professional occupations for their children, while parents of leavers aspired largely to the skilled manual and white collar occupational categories. Parents were the major source of advice when leavers discussed leaving school: 38 per cent of the leavers frequently discussed their job plans with parents compared with 22 per cent of the stayers; 52 per cent of leavers occasionally had such discussions compared with 69 per cent of the stayers; approximately ten per cent of both stayers and leavers never discussed their job plans with parents. There was a greater number of leavers, compared with stayers, whose mothers' and fathers' educational levels were identical. The stayers were more likely to have come from families where the father had reached a higher level of education than the mother. In terms of birth order, stayers more than leavers are more likely to be the eldest, while leavers generally occupy the second or third eldest position.

Concerning school factors, it will be recalled that early leavers had, for the most part, indicated negative attitudes to school and had felt that school had failed to interest them in learning. Comparison of the responses given by leavers and stayers, in answer to a question concerning boredom at school revealed a significant difference. Approximately one out of every three leavers (35.1 per cent) reported that they were 'bored and fed up' with school, compared with one in five (21.7 per cent) of the stayers.

When the stayers and leavers were compared on average school achievement scores, the differentiation between the two groups was highlighted. The concentration of leavers in the bottom quartiles was clearly marked. Stayers were over-represented in the top two quartiles. This pattern of achievement differences between stayers and leavers was replicated across a number of curriculum areas, viz. humanities, sciences, maths, vocational and trade areas, commercial, and art and craft subjects. Thus, one of the major differences between the sample of stayers and leavers (matched on IQ scores) was their level of school achievement.

Another major difference between the stayers and leavers was found in their scores on the Aberdeen Academic Achievement Motivation Test (A.A.M.). There was a marked difference in motivation towards schooling by the two groups; 47 per cent of the leavers had low A.A.M. compared with 21 per cent of the stayers, while

23 per cent of the leavers showed high A.A.M. compared with 44 per cent of the stayers. Further, the educational and job expectations of the stayers and leavers, with the stayers expecting to complete more years of schooling and to obtain more professional and fewer manual jobs.

Interestingly no significant differences between the stayers and leavers emerged on the personality dimensions explored in this study, viz., introversion/extraversion, neuroticism and self-esteem. The distribution of the groups in the categories high, medium and low, for each test yielded no statistically significant chi-squares. The result for self-esteem is especially interesting and contrary to expectations.

The next stage of the analysis set out to predict the stayers and the leavers. Multiple discriminant function analysis was used to weight and linearly combine the discriminating variables (together with a selection of value statements) so that the stayers and leavers would be as statistically distinct as possible on some interpretable dimension, and so that group membership (classification) of new students could be predicted.

The significance of the groups was tested by means of the criterion. This analysis yielded a highly significant differentiation among the groups ($p/.0001$, $df = 15$).

The most powerful individual predictor variables were: educational expectations at age 14, parents' perceived job aspirations for students, educational expectations, education aspirations, academic achievement motivation and students' own job aspiration. This function suggested 'a school and career achievement' or 'success press'. Finer examination of the nature of the differences between leavers and stayers can be made by considering the correlations between the discriminant functions and the original variables and by examining the group centroids. The centroid of the Leavers Group on Function 1 was .471 while that for the Stayers Group was .450. Stayers exhibited a high press towards school and career success, while leavers reveal markedly lower educational and career aspirations. The standardised discriminant function coefficients indicated that group separation was determined largely by occupational expectation, fathers' job aspiration for the student, and the students' academic achievement motivation.

To what extent did this parsimonious and powerful combination of variables predict group membership? Stayers and leavers in this sample could be successfully classified on the basis of Discriminant Function 1 in 72 out of every 100 cases. Thus, a knowledge of students' academic achievement motivation, occupational expectation and father's job aspirations for students enable one to predict likely stayers and likely leavers with a high degree of accuracy (seven cases in ten). Notwithstanding, there still exists, of course, the need for cross-validation of this finding in future research.

In summary, then, this study investigated a number of variables in school, home, attitudinal, vocational and personality areas which might be used (a) to determine reasons for school leaving, (b) to differentiate early school leavers from stayers once the powerful determinants of social class, intelligence and sex had been controlled for, and (c) to predict, as accurately as possible, the likely leavers and the likely stayers.

Students who became early leavers generally disliked school, found school irrelevant in terms of their future occupational plans, and were generally unable or unwilling to cope with further schooling. These results are consistent with those reported in a number of North American Studies (e.g., Ahlstrom and Havighurst 1971²⁴ Hunt and Clawson 1975²⁵) and in the United Kingdom (Birmingham Educational Development Program 1971;²⁶ Thornburg 1975²⁷)

One notable difference between the results of this study and those exploring personality differences between stayers and leavers elsewhere was the absence of significant differences on the personality dimensions explored, namely, introversion/extraversion, neuroticism and self-esteem. The absence of self-esteem differences is particularly interesting. Perhaps self-esteem is linked to ability rather than to attainment; alternatively, leavers, by rejecting the relevance of school, may use peer-group or community-related experiences for self-concept building and maintenance. Certainly the leavers in this study did not appear to exhibit any of the personality pathologies usually attributed to early leavers and the present findings are contrary to those reported by Namenwirth (1969)²⁸, and Richter and Scandrette (1971)²⁹.

The variables which most distinguished the leavers from the stayers in the matched comparison analyses did, however, reflect trends perceived in a number of overseas studies comparing 'dropouts' and 'stay-ins'. The leavers, relative to the stayers, were characterized by lower levels of attainment, achievement motivation and educational and job expectations. These results are consistent with those reported by Barker (1952)³⁰, Chilman (1959)³¹, and Richter and Scandrette (1971)³². In addition, leavers lacked one important advantage held by stayers in that the stayers' academic strivings were underpinned by students' perceptions of high job aspirations held for them by their parents.

The results of the discriminant function analysis point to a powerful combination of school and future job orientation factors generally absent from the research literature, except at the level of 'no school credential, no professional career expectations'. It seems that academic achievement motivation is a dominant predictor which, combined with perception of one's parents' expectations for oneself and one's own educational and job aspirations, produces a school-career achievement press which contributes to motivations for extended schooling, thereby sharply differentiating the stayer from the early school leaver.

The implications of this research are complex and need to be viewed in current context of major structural and curriculum changes undertaken by schools to cater for 'dropouts' (e.g. Sindos, 1970;³³ Clark, 1968;³⁴ Carranza, 1975,³⁵ Zeaman, 1974³⁶) and in the debate as to whether early leaving is a social pathology at all (Bachman, Green and Wirtanen, 1972³⁷). Some have argued that, at least for high school age students, school may not be the best place to be and that, with extensions or recurrent education and re-training programs, a philosophy of 'dropping in' and 'dropping out' of alternative educational systems is not only possible, but socially desirable depending on age, interests and needs. Only time will tell whether the trend will be towards diagnosing and preventing early leaving or re-structuring secondary, tertiary and continuing education so that early leaving is merely an option and not a final statement on one's educational and life chances.

Although the study provides interesting and differentiated profiles of stayers and leavers, and some enhanced understanding of the processes involved in the decision to stay or leave, it does not provide adequate information on early female leavers. This was mainly due to the sampling design. By using a matched sample, some of the areas of expected difference were immediately controlled for example, sex differences. However, a follow-up study by Poole and Lowe, which explores the separate profiles of male and female early leavers and stayers is in progress and should lead to a better understanding of sex differences in early leaving.

An earlier study by Poole & Jones (1976)³⁸, based on the data described in this section did, however, attempt some descriptive differentiation of early male and female leavers, in terms of their school and on-the-job experiences. This study is discussed below. To some extent it overlaps with the above study, but it provides added insight into the views expressed by early leavers. Unfortunately, the sex differences between male and female early leavers are not as sharply drawn as would have been desirable to meet the special focus of this review.

Early School Leavers, Poole and Jones (1976)³⁹

What are the most important reasons determining which students leave school early? What are the major influences on the leaving decision? These questions were considered as part of the La Trobe 15-18 year old Project which attempted to examine issues related to secondary schooling in a Victorian context. This early leavers study examined why early leavers leave, who or what influences the decision to leave, and what early leavers feel about school and work experience.

The sample selection, based on that described in Poole (1978)⁴⁰ above, comprised three sub-groups:

- 121 early school leavers (Total Early Leavers), i.e. 15-year-olds who left in Form IV (Year 10), half not completing this year but

leaving on reaching the statutory leaving age.

- . 121 school stayers matched with group (1) on IQ, father's occupation and sex (Matched stayers)
- . The total sample of school stayers (N = 672, Total Stayers).

In 1972 and 1973 questionnaires were completed by the students (all aged 14). Follow-up information on the academic performance of these students was obtained, together with information as to whether or not these students had remained at school after turning 15. During 1974 and 1975 a number of early school leavers and school stayers were either interviewed or asked to answer a questionnaire about their school and work experiences. What follows is a broad profile identifying the leaver. In addition, the educational and occupational plans and attainments of early leavers are discussed to see what these adolescents hoped for from schooling and life. For a small number of leavers who obtained jobs upon leaving school, their post-school experiences and reflections on their initial schooling are included. More complex analysis of factors influencing the school leaving behaviour of these Melbourne adolescents was discussed above in Poole (1978)⁴¹ and will appear in Poole and Lowe (in progress)⁴².

The descriptive data on the Total Early Leaver Sample indicated that: (a) early school leavers in Melbourne are more likely to come from State rather than independent schools, and technical rather than State high schools; (b) early leavers are more likely to come from working-class background rather than middle-class background; (c) early leavers are more likely to come from homes where both parents have no more than minimal educational qualifications. At the level of analysis in this study, in terms of the length of time students spend at secondary school, a systematic pattern of social class differentiation seemed to be operating. There was, interestingly enough, no sex factor operating - approximately equal numbers of males and females made up the Total Early Leaver sample.

Why did students leave school at their first opportunity on turning 15? Students gave several reasons for leaving school early. There were those students who no longer felt a compulsion to remain at school because their chosen vocational interest or job requirement necessitated no further academic study. For other students, failure at school and an inability to cope with school work often led to negative labelling, such as 'a failure'. Some students saw an incompatibility between themselves and the school setting - hence their justification for leaving school early. Another main reason was a general dislike of or disinterest in school life as a whole. Particular aspects of school life cited were teachers, school discipline and the inability of the school curriculum to meet certain needs. Financial difficulties and problems at home were mentioned only by a minority of students (mainly girls) as reasons for leaving school early. The influence of peers,

parents and teachers was minimal. On the whole, the majority of students stated more than one reason for leaving school at the first opportunity.

Examples of the types of responses given by male and female early leavers were, according to category:

Teachers:

The teachers didn't care about the kids.

Didn't like the teachers or the class I was in.

To put it bluntly, I hated school. It was boring me more than anything and teachers picked on kids when they did poorly, when they should help.

School curriculum:

Wasn't happy with the program, the things I wanted to do they weren't teaching.

I was not allowed to do the subjects I wanted to do because three of them could not be fitted on the timetable. I would have had to do three histories. This would have been a waste of time as I wanted to do a business course.

Irrelevance of school:

I left school because, for the career I chose, there was no sense in furthering my schooling at high school.

I left school because I was getting to the stage where I was always bored and I wasn't learning anything new. Also, the thought of work and earning my own money sounded good to me. It would be different from school.

Failure at school:

The main reason I left was I failed and didn't want to repeat the same form again.

Didn't think I could pass Form 5 (Year 11).

Financial and other problems:

I needed money to buy things as my mum was separated and couldn't afford to be buying things and giving me and the rest of the family pocket money. I have to leave. (Early female leaver)

My mother passed away February, 1973. Housework and school work did not mix making it hard for me and my results were beginning to suffer. (Early female leaver)

Combination:

They (teachers) treated you like a baby, I was learning nothing and didn't like school rules.

Didn't like many of the teachers, senior mistress asked me nicely to leave, wasn't doing too well in my subjects and wanted some money to buy clothes, etc. (*Early Female Leaver*) (Poole and Jones 1976) ⁴³

Overall, early school leavers fell into three different categories: job-oriented early leavers, school-failed early leavers and school disenchanted early leavers (as in Poole, 1978). ⁴⁵ Job-orientated early leavers were those students who could not see any need for or benefit in furthering their education because they had satisfied the basic educational requirements for their chosen job. This category included apprentices in various fields and students seeking secretarial jobs. School-failed early leavers were those students who had failed or who regarded themselves as failures and saw no harmony between themselves and school life. Disenchanted early school leavers were those who found school boring and irrelevant. They exhibited a general disinterest towards schooling on the whole. Although three distinct types have been outlined, these types were often closely inter-related. The early leaver can most adequately be described as a combination of types. For example, there were leavers who wanted to work for various reasons and had negative attitudes towards school and so on.

What factors most influenced early leaving for males and females? To ascertain this, early leavers were compared with a matched sample of stayers to examine what factors influenced early leaving decisions. The home influences examined included factors such as the occupational and educational level of parents, parental aspirations and the student's position in the family. It was found that there was a marked difference between parental job aspirations for leavers and parental job aspirations for stayers. The perceived parental job aspirations for early leavers was the same as the level their parents had attained themselves, whereas, for a matched sample of stayers it was perceived to be higher than the level attained by their parents. This result was similar for all occupational levels. Generally, early school leavers were more likely to come from a home where the mother worked, either on a full-time or part-time basis.

When discussing leaving plans and job opportunities, leavers more than stayers often turned to their parents for advice, although their parents were not found to have much influence on their length of schooling. Parental advice mainly consisted of helping the student decide what was best for him/her with emphasis on obtaining an acceptable job which offered security.

The educational level of both parents was found to be another factor related to early leaving. Students of parents with identical educational level were more inclined to be early

leavers, whereas students of parents where the fathers' educational level was higher than the mothers' were more inclined to be stayers.

The position in the family was also found to be of relevance. Those students who were first born in the family (oldest child) were more likely to stay at school, whereas those occupying the position of second and third eldest were more likely to leave school early.

The school influences included such aspects as inability to cope, failure, boredom and disinterest in school life. These were the main influencing factors for the majority of leavers and not simply that the job they had chosen required no further academic study.

Student's intellectual ability, academic achievement motivations, job aspirations, personal values and personality, were tested by various methods to ascertain their impact on leaving school early. It was found that there was a concentration of leavers in the bottom quartiles of average school achievement scores and that fewer early leavers perceived themselves to be in the top quartiles as compared with stayers. As far as intellectual ability was concerned the matched stayers and leavers were similar in terms of IQ measurements. The majority of fathers of low IQ leavers were of lower occupational level, whereas for matched stayers there was no significant difference in occupational levels of fathers of low IQ scorers and high IQ scorers.

There was a significant difference between academic achievement motivation scores for the two groups. The majority of leavers exhibited low academic achievement motivation whereas the majority of stayers exhibited high academic achievement motivation.

In addition, a difference was apparent in their commitment to schooling. Job expectations also showed differing results between the two groups. The majority of stayers aspired to higher occupational levels; on the other hand the majority of leavers aspired to lower occupational levels, whether male or female.

Although the values held by the two groups differed, personality factors were fairly constant except that more early leavers than stayers had low self-esteem and high extroversion.

What, then, were the educational and occupational plans and attainments of the early leavers? In many instances expectations and goals regarding educational and occupational plans of early leavers were not met. Why? To begin with, it was found that in terms of intellectual ability the two groups (stayers and leavers) did not greatly diverge. Clarity of job choice also did not differ greatly between the two groups and therefore this too did not offer an adequate explanation of why goals and expectations were not met. Measures of

school achievement for both stayers and leavers who hoped to continue beyond Form 4 (Year 10) alone did not give an adequate explanation for change of plans, although the majority of stayers who changed their plans had medium to high scores for academic achievement.

It seems that parental aspiration for their children was the most significant influence on whether or not students achieve their job expectations. For example, parental hopes, as perceived by stayers, in the 'professional occupations' category was two and a half times greater than for matched leavers. Similarly, perceived parental hopes in the categories 'skilled to unskilled occupations' for leavers was ten times greater than that of matched stayers. In addition, students who had intended leaving school early (but in fact stayed on) indicated that their parents held high aspirations for them; whereas those students whose early leaving plans did not change had parents who held low aspirations for them whether they were males or females.

An interesting aspect of this study was the follow-up of the post-school experiences of early leavers. Sixty-four of the early leavers were followed up in the study. More than half left school before reaching their expected level of education, giving such reasons as dislike of school, financial difficulties and difficulties coping with school work. This change in educational attainment as distinct from educational expectations was accompanied by changes in job expectations and attainment. Those who had not reached their expected level of education considered occupations requiring lower educational qualifications. Hence, just over one third of the followed-up leavers matched their job expectations. Some were apprentices and some were in typist or receptionist work.

The majority of leavers had undergone some sort of research regarding their job prior to leaving school. This entailed either actual search for a job, discussion and advice from family and friends or knowledge of where to apply for jobs. Consequently the majority took less than one month to obtain a job. The student's personal efforts proved to be the most important source for securing a job, then help from family and friends. Government agencies proved to be of little significance. The most important source of careers advice was that from teachers with whom the student had established a good relationship. Just over a quarter of the leavers sought vocational guidance from vocational guidance counselors. The family played a minor role in choice of career for early leavers.

In response to a question asking why they had chosen their present job, some leavers, especially female, indicated a phase of reality confrontation and the tempering of their aspirations. Some examples of lowered expectations were:

From nurse to receptionist.

From primary teacher to cake decorator.

From reporter to semi-skilled and then unemployed.

From hairdresser to semi-skilled and unemployed.

From tradesman to labourer.

As to the jobs they finally filled, the following aspects attracted leavers, in order of highest to lowest frequency of response:

- . nature of the work (interesting, had the right skills);
- . person-oriented reasons (liked meeting people, working with friends, work mates);
- . conditions (money, hours, holidays, physical amenities);
- . only job available (needed job for financial reasons, temporary fill-in job);
- . security and for promotional reasons.

An interesting sex difference was that boys in trade occupations most often mentioned the character of the work as being satisfying whereas girls most often talked about person-oriented reasons contributing to their job satisfaction.

When questioned as to the adequacy of the advice offered to them by the school, more than 80 per cent of the followed-up leavers felt it was inadequate both in terms of offering advice to leavers to help them choose jobs and also in terms of giving them sufficient information about what work would be like.

One of the values of this study was that early leavers reflected on what should be done to assist them in the transition from school to work. A summary of the response types in order of highest frequency to lowest, included recommendations that:

- . school should provide more understanding of work conditions; how to cope in a job; the type of work involved in different jobs; how to apply for a job;
- . schools should organize more visiting speakers from the world of work; more talks by specialists and more class discussions on work;
- . schools should help students decide what job they are best suited to, find out what they (the students) are interested in and provide information in these areas;

- schools should extend careers information to lower forms, e.g. Form 3 (Year 9) to reach early leavers sooner;
- schools should organize more contact with careers advisers, more careers nights, school visits;
- teachers should become more informed about careers;
- more written information should be made available to students on careers.

These recommendations are very sound and show the concern leavers themselves have for bridging the gap between school and work.

Finally, leavers were asked to consider whether they would have stayed at school longer if school could be changed in ways they considered desirable. Some 40 per cent answered that it would not have affected their leaving decision. However, one-third (34 per cent) indicated that they would have stayed on, while 26 per cent were uncertain. Does this provide some evidence for the contention that school has played an important role in the leaving decision of some of the early leavers? Might a change within schools have altered their educational and possibly, therefore, their vocational plans?

Suggestions offered concerning change stressed the significance of curriculum and were: greater variety of subject choice; greater relevance of subjects to needs and interests; changes in content of particular subjects; and more out-of-class activities. The students also advanced ideas for change in student-teacher relationships such as more individual attention to different students' needs, greater understanding and friendliness and creating more interest in subjects. Mention of preferences for younger or older teachers were also made. General changes in conditions and facilities offered by the school with reference to rules and regulations were also felt to be important factors. Preferences for particular subjects were usually related to their relevance to the outside world and to the students own personal interests. A relationship was found between those subjects where the student performed poorly and those subjects which the student disliked. The most enjoyable aspects of schooling as reflected upon by early leavers were friends and social aspects, learning interesting subjects, 'stirring' or breaking rules, helpful teachers and the hours of schooling.

It is worth noting that the majority of early leavers felt they had made the right decision in leaving school early although their reasons differed, for example:

- I have a greater variety of friends and knowledge, not to mention money.
- I would have had to leave anyway because I became pregnant.
(Early female leaver)

- . I probably would not have succeeded as well as I wanted to in my Leaving results due to the subjects I took.
- . I am satisfied with my job.

Those leavers who felt they had not made the right decision stated reasons involving poor job opportunities or lack of job satisfaction, for example:

- . Because you cannot get a good career.
- . Because I could have learnt more and maybe have a good job.
- . Because I hate work.

The study by Poole and Jones (1976)⁴⁵ concluded with a number of questions as to whether early leaving can be pre-empted and indeed whether this is desirable. These issues are taken up in chapter 8.

On the whole, the study covers a number of important aspects concerning the antecedents of early leaving and some of their consequences. The follow-up component was too limited however. Had resources been available, all leavers from the 32 schools in the sample should have been followed up yearly. Such follow-ups are costly, time-consuming, and labour intensive. They do provide more accurate information on what does actually happen to early leavers and the views of leavers, in retrospect, on their schooling and their current attitudes to work. Rather than using schools as the basis for sampling, it may be more useful in such studies to use employment agencies and youth centres for the unemployed to carry out a more in-depth analysis of aspects of early leaving. Such a strategy is also more likely to produce more definitive data, thereby enabling differential profiles of early male and early female leavers to be constructed separately. That there are differences can be implied, even from this study, in that early pregnancy and the role of domestic at home are factors which most clearly can vitiate the aspirations of early female leavers.

Are there any other factors in early school leaving which are unique to early female leavers? The studies carried out to date in Australia provide no definitive answer to that question. Some added insight might be gained, however, from an analysis of a number of case studies of early female leavers. This is attempted in the following section.

CASE STUDIES OF EARLY FEMALE LEAVERS

There are no compilations of systematic case studies or case histories of early female leavers in Australia that have been published. Doubtless, material on the school histories of early leavers is held by counsellors in schools but this information is rarely drawn together. Likewise, the work

histories of some leavers is probably held by Commonwealth employment agencies. There is, however, no systematic tracking of school leavers in Australia, except in broad demographic terms by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Some selected case histories of early female and male leavers were presented in a research report undertaken by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) entitled *Survey of Young Workers* (1975)⁴⁶. Excerpts of the histories on early female leavers are presented to depict the composite of factors which determine the life chances of early female leavers:

1. Comptometrist (19)

Her father left her mother when the respondent was eight years old. Her mother is dead and the child was brought up by her aunt, the eldest in a family of eleven children. She became 'uncontrollable' and was expelled from school after fourth form. Her aunt sent her to 'reform school' where she developed such a hatred of government institutions that she deliberately failed her Leaving. She also gave this aversion as a reason for not using the Commonwealth Employment Service or the Commonwealth unemployment benefit when later out of work. She did receive some helpful careers guidance from teachers at school and from a vocational guidance officer, but feels that being a female has restricted her job opportunities and that she did not have an adequate idea of career opportunities available on leaving school.

In her present job she would like 'higher wages and greater opportunities for advancement'. She would prefer to be a teacher and, having recently inherited a little money from her mother's estate, plans to go to night school and matriculate so that she can realise her ambition. She has had 'financial difficulties: no source of income or insufficient to cover basic needs'. She regrets having had to leave school early.

2. Receptionist (18)

She left school after completing fourth form because 'although she liked school and was getting good marks in Form 4 the quality of the teaching staff seemed to decline'. The only careers guidance available at school were 'pamphlets and books' and 'talks by careers guidance officers' of which only the former were helpful. She feels that she did not have an adequate idea of the career opportunities available to her on leaving school and that her present job has no opportunities for advancement. She now wishes she had stayed longer at school. The interviewer noted: 'Since leaving school she has had more time to think about her future and realises that more education would probably mean a better and more interesting job'.

3. Cashier (18)

She left school before completing third form to help support her family. Her father was too sick to work and was unable to get a pension because he was sick when he arrived in Australia.

She received no careers guidance from anyone. She feels that being a female has restricted her job opportunities and that she did not

have an adequate idea of career opportunities on leaving school. She has graduated from salesgirl to cashier and feels that her present job has good opportunities for advancement, but she wishes she could have stayed longer at school so that she could have got a better job.

4. Receiving clerk

Asked to leave school before completing third form. She has had some minor 'trouble with the law' and appears to be on bad terms with her father. She had no careers guidance at all from school. She would have liked to stay at school so that she could have got a better job, and would prefer to be a computer programmer. She does feel her present (and only job) has good opportunities for advancement, but when asked what improvements she would like in her job ticked 'more interesting job, and greater opportunities for advancement'.

5. Accounts clerk (17)

She left school at the end of fifth form because she had not taken the right subjects for matriculation, and is now attempting night school in order to matriculate. She received every indicated type of careers guidance at school and found it all helpful 'except discussions with teachers' which she said was not available. She feels she did not have an adequate idea of career opportunities available on leaving school. Her present job has 'few opportunities for advancement' and she would prefer to be a school teacher. The job improvements that she chose were 'more interesting job and greater opportunities for advancement'. She regrets having left school early which she did only because she could not go on to matriculation with the subjects she had done.

(Survey of Young Workers 1975)⁴⁷

These histories reveal, in a different form to those reported in earlier studies, the inadequacy of careers counselling, the realisation that staying on would have enhanced job prospects, and the intrusion of circumstances beyond the control of the leavers (e.g. sickness, death in family). A new element emerges, however, and it is unfortunate that more extensive case study material is not available in Australia to determine how significant the element is. The new dimension is the awareness that being female is a limitation to one's job opportunities - the comptometrist and the cashier reveal this quite clearly. None of the case histories of the male early leavers (reported in the ACTU study) in any way suggested that being male had disadvantaged them in terms of job opportunities.

Several case histories of disadvantaged youth were included in the report, *Schooling and Work* (Behrens 1978)⁴⁸, as part of the 'Poverty and Education Series' for the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. Despite their particular emphasis, they do provide interesting descriptions of the school careers and early work experience of a number of male and female leavers. A selection of female cases is presented below to illustrate sex specific factors which might be operative.

Case 1: Robyn

Robyn's father worked as a labourer and her mother a housemaid when she was at school. Robyn lived in a housing commission suburb and attended schools which would now be called disadvantaged. Neither parent had gained a secondary education.

Robyn started school at six and a half and left school at fourteen and a half. She had a poor pattern of attendance and did Level 1 subjects at high school. Her parents never talked to her teachers about her progress at school. Robyn feels that teachers didn't take much interest in her and didn't care whether or not she succeeded. She was delighted to have an excuse to stay at home from school but say that, on the whole, she quite liked school.

Robyn left school to stay home and mind her sister's baby. She now feels she left too early because she has no training for any type of work. Neither her parents nor her teachers tried to persuade her to stay on. After six months, Robyn began seasonal work as an apple-corer in a fruit juice factory. At 16 she married a mill-hand aged 19 but left her husband two months after marriage. Robyn had a baby four months later, receiving financial assistance from the Social Welfare Department. Subsequently she had two ex-nuptial children but didn't keep these.

Robyn has not been in the labour force in the 10 years since her marriage; she receives Social Welfare benefits and some assistance from the father of her daughter. She lives with her parents but plans to go to Sydney to look for work. Robyn sees any further education or training for herself as irrelevant. Although she is keen for her daughter to finish high school she evidently isn't getting on very well at school. Robyn has pen-friends in a number of countries and our interviewer felt that, while lacking in self-confidence, Robyn was pleasant to speak to and had something in her, a spark... (Behrens 1978)⁴⁹

Case 2: Lorraine

Lorraine is the daughter of a farmer with a large beef cattle property. She attended the local district school for primary classes. Her parents felt that it was essential for her to go further with her education than was available at the district school and decided to send her to the country high school about 30 miles away. To begin with Lorraine boarded, but she was homesick, so then travelled the full 30 miles back home each day. Lorraine completed Grade 10 at school and gained her Schools Board A Certificate. She didn't go on to Grade 11 because 'in those days you only went on to matric if you were going to teachers college'.

After leaving school Lorraine went to the city to train as a mothercraft nurse because she 'didn't know what I wanted to do'. She became homesick and left early in the first year. For the last seven years Lorraine has been a farmhand on her parents' property. She finds this work interesting and doesn't intend to leave - 'it's in my blood'. Lorraine works for \$30 a week but is to be taken into partnership. She earns extra money by spinning and occasional relief milking.

Lorraine is not married. She is very concerned about her retarded younger brother but she is saving to go on a world trip with her cousin. Lorraine feels that she is caught in a system from which she can't escape. Asked about the circumstances she feels limit her she said, 'It's the general way things run in our society'. (Behrens 1978)⁵⁰

Case 3: Linda

Linda's father was a groundsman and her mother did domestic work while she was at school. Linda attended schools which we would call intermediate in terms of social advantage.

Linda started school at four and a half and left at the age of fifteen. She studied at fourth year secondary level but left before the end of the year. Her parents were keen for her to do well at school but left important decisions about things like courses and leaving school to the girl herself. Linda left school because a job as a typist was available and she wanted to make her 'career' there. She now feels that she should have stayed at school longer because somehow her lack of qualifications limit her opportunities.

Linda stayed as a typist for three years and later became a nurses-aide and a waitress. She married at the age of 20 and has two children. Her husband was often unemployed: he sometimes walked out but always returned. After a recent spell in gaol he has been unable to find work but evidently hasn't looked too hard. Linda, perhaps unrealistically, applied to do a hotel management course through the NEAT (National Employment and Training) scheme but was turned down.

She feels caught in a system from which she can't escape and that her life is not stimulating enough. She thinks that her chances in life are limited because of her lack of education and lack of support at times when a decision had to be made (e.g. leaving school, retraining). Linda struck our interviewer as being intelligent but apathetic and sorry for herself. She is generally dissatisfied with her life. (Behrens 1978)⁵¹

Case 4: Brenda

Brenda is the daughter of a shearer; her father left home when she was thirteen. Brenda's mother married at 16, never having worked. Brenda attended three district schools up to Grade 7 when she was admitted to a training centre for disturbed girls and did further study at the local high school. On leaving, she tried correspondence school work but gained no award. Brenda feels that standards and facilities in country schools meant that her education was poorer than it would have been if she had lived in the city.

After leaving home at the age of sixteen Brenda became a textile worker but was shortly admitted to a psychiatric hospital. On discharge she began training as an auxiliary nurse and later worked as a nurses-aide in the country. In 1969 Brenda got married and since then has not been in the labour force. As she has a child she feels that she should not be in full-time employment but would like to get part-time employment (e.g. housework) or do further study. Further study seems impossible because facilities are not available

in the country centre where she lives.

Brenda feels caught up in a system from which she can't escape. 'I couldn't take a job before because I wanted to look after my child. Now that he's started school I can't get a job. There aren't many part-time jobs here and having no school qualifications doesn't help.' (Behrens 1978)⁵²

These case studies suggest that in addition to the influence of poverty, there are specific factors operating leading to the early termination decision by females. Neither Robyn, Linda or Brenda had mothers who had completed schooling or obtained jobs that were skilled. Maternal role models in these cases would tend to reinforce the decision to leave. In contrast, Lorraine's parents had a commitment to her further schooling. Despite this, Lorraine was really working at home for sub-standard remuneration. The syndrome of girls being asked to 'stay at home and help out' is evident in both Robyn's and Lorraine's case histories. The case studies presented by Behrens are particularly useful; not only do they highlight aspects unique to the female leavers, but also they enable the post-school leaving experiences to be traced for several years. Responsibility for child-rearing kept some of these women out of the work-force. Attempts to return were frustrated by insufficient part-time jobs and by the belated realisation that without qualifications there are few places to go. The case studies also suggest that some of these women, all of whom were early leavers, felt trapped.

Two case studies which were not typical of the circumstances confronting early female leavers were provided by a project officer involved in a Schools Commission Special Projects (Innovations) Program entitled *Disadvantaged Early Leavers* (Tasmania).⁵³

Case Study No.1

M. is 14; hates school, especially typing which she does as an elective. Says she can't understand a lot of the work. Wanted to do English Speech and Drama but wasn't allowed to. Likes English, especially reading the prescribed novels. Wants an exemption at end of school year (she is in 3rd year). Doesn't know what she wants to do; has thought vaguely of shop work as you meet more people.

Gets on reasonably well with mother; can't talk to father. Hates living at home because there are 11 people living in a three bedroom house. No privacy. Her brothers are always teasing her and calling her a 'moll' and a 'slut', and say she shouldn't be allowed out at night. She often feels she must get out of the house. Showed an interest in cooking but says she can't cook at home as she is 'rubbished' too much by her brothers and sisters. Would love to try.

Very shy and defensive. Speaks in a whisper and drops her eyes. Very negative attitude towards school and life in general. Sense of failure and despair in whole attitude.

N.B. Last week M. was charged with shoplifting and sent to Weerona (girls receiving home).

Case Study No.2

L. is 15. Lives in a receiving home. Very embarrassed when asked why. (The point not pressed.) She is a twin and her twin sister is also in a receiving home. Hates school and is bored stiff with it. Says she often couldn't do the work as it was too hard. Has no interest or hobbies. Goes to her boyfriend's house every weekend. L. said she has given up truancing from school as she doesn't want to get into any more trouble, which would mean she would not be able to return to her parents. Says her father is moody and morose. Said she had no idea what her father thought about anything, including herself. Said her mother wanted to leave her father. If she does, L. would like to go with her, if her mother wanted her. (L. doesn't know whether she does or not.)

L. says she worries a lot about the future and her troubles and has no one to talk to but her boyfriend. Can hardly wait to leave school and intends leaving at end of year. If her mother doesn't want her, she will live with her boyfriend. Said she does nothing in her spare time and seldom goes out. L. is already passive and defeated and very much into accepted role of Australian female of her class.

N.B. Last week L. left school (exempted) to work in a corner shop.

Again, it is unfortunate that at the time of this review, no systematic analyses of the case studies being collected in the *Disadvantaged Early Leavers* project were available. Yet the vignettes above highlight the social and personal circumstances facing early female leavers, the possibility of aberrant behaviour (crime, moral risk, and truancy), the disaffection with schooling, the moodiness and a sense of despair and/or defeat. These aspects of personal difficulties with family and trouble with the law did not emerge previously in any of the studies discussed earlier in this chapter. The need for case study data on early female leavers (and indeed male leavers) seems to be a research priority. This is certainly the case if those concerned with problems of early leaving want a more person-based data source than general demographic trends and component analyses of causal models of factors contributing to leaving. That these kinds of research are necessary and desirable is indisputable. If research stops there, however, it is doubtful whether any in-depth understanding of the concerns of early leavers, especially female leavers, will be developed.

STUDIES WITH A MINOR FOCUS ON LEAVING

There has been a marked increase in the number of studies in Australia investigating aspects of adolescence in the 1970s. Many of these studies have looked at aspects relating to school leaving, though not necessarily within such a specific framework. In this section, some cognizance is given to a selection of these studies, to confirm or to enlarge the

perspectives presented in the previous chapters.

The study, *12 to 20: Studies of City Youth* (Connell, Stroobant, Sinclair, Connell and Rogers 1975)⁵⁵ investigated the personal, social and educational characteristics of Sydney teenagers. It contained aspects relating to current schooling and to post-secondary education and employment. No items on 'leaving' are contained in the index. There are, however, aspects on the 'drop-out' phenomenon.

The data indicated that second-generation migrants tended on the whole to stay on at school:

The groups mainly responsible for creating the impression of a general migrant drop-out from school after 15 would be Southern Italians, Northern Italians, Yugoslavs and Greeks and it is significant that they are the most predominantly lower class ethnic groups. (Connell et al 1975)⁵⁵

Ability differences were advanced as a reason for migrant drop-outs:

...ethnic groups with significantly lower mean IQ are under-represented in senior forms on the basis of ability. (Connell et al 1975)⁵⁶

The difference is most marked in the 15-16 age group which suggests that many more migrants of above average ability leave at 15 than is the case with Australians. (Connell et al 1975)⁵⁷

Social and cultural reasons are advanced to explain this drop-out among migrants.

The two problems most concerning male and female adolescents relating to school and work were 'choosing a future job' and 'how well I do at school'. (Connell et al 1975)⁵⁸

One interesting finding was that, before the school leaving age, boys were more likely to have had job experience than were girls. A fantasy element in the job choices of many girls was evident:

A very impressive number of young girls hope to be models, dress-makers, fashion designers, or at least to work in a dress shop. This is the nearest thing to the world of glamour and music that looms so large in their fantasies and their peer-group life at this stage. (Connell et al 1975)⁵⁹

Adolescents of all ages, both male and female, had unrealistically high job aspirations in 'professional' categories. Connell et al stated (but provided little evidence to that effect) that:

Girls drop out of school in great numbers; but early-leaving girls seem rather to have been tipped out of school than to have escaped under their own steam. They are distinctly less euphoric about their jobs than the boys; understandably, as they are generally low-

paid and dead-end tasks, chosen without enthusiasm. (Connell et al 1975)⁶⁰

In addition, the point was made that girls' jobs are likely to be perceived as 'stop-gap jobs' prior to marriage. Even the jobs of girls who participate in extended schooling were viewed in the same way:

The path through the higher years of school leads to something different for both sexes. For the boys, it is a normal start to a career in business, or a beginning of training for the higher professions. For girls, it will usually lead to marriage, but often after a stint in one of the semi-professions, nursing or teaching most commonly, for which school graduation is required. (Connell et al 1975)⁶²

Jobs held by teenagers in the out-of-school sample showed a marked sex differentiation with girls concentrated in clerical work and secretarial jobs. This was most marked for early female leavers, 64 per cent of whom were in clerical jobs, 13 per cent in shop assistant positions. One positive aspect of early female leaving was a rise in self-esteem for the leavers. Regrettably the girls who stayed at school experienced diminishing self-esteem from the age of twelve. Their analysis of the reasons for drop-out occurring among girls differed from their social class analysis and indicated that 'not only are girls equally engaged with schooling, they are equally competent in handling the official culture. Their intelligence test scores are just as high as boys, and in late adolescence their interest in intellectual matters is actually a little higher', (Connell et al 1975)⁶³. Differences in interest and temperament were advanced:

...there is a greater stress on sociability and human relations on the part of girls. Girls appear more repressed, anxious and conventionally moral, boys more aggressive and uninhibited. ... Clearly, the patterns of taste and temperament connected with the traditional middle-class role of wife-and-mother are being reproduced in this generation of girls. Most of them expect to get married ... and most of them expect to have children. The sex differences in school drop-out and occupational destiny, we may argue, are closely linked to these non-intellectual matters. (Connell et al 1975)⁶⁴

In a follow-up study of selected young adolescents who had participated in the Connell et al study, Stroobant (1978)⁶⁵ extended the analysis of post-school experiences (work and further education). The Stroobant study was entitled *Disadvantage as School and Post-School Experience* and was undertaken for the Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. In summary, the major findings, which add to our knowledge of school leavers in Australia were:

- Early leavers disliked education and school subjects, this dislike being a 'cumulative appreciation of its past and present irrelevance to their personal lives and job expectations (Stroobant 1978)⁶⁶ and

'a resigned acceptance of its minimal relevance to oneself and to one's working life'. (Stroobant 1978)⁶⁶

- . Only a minority of working adults, after leaving school, were willing or in a position to pursue further studies, and these were more likely to be men than women.
- . Sex differences in job destinations appeared to disadvantage young adult women more than social class differences did.
- . A basic divisiveness of teenagers into early leavers and later stayers is a main accomplishment of the schools' system, which is itself a mechanism for perpetuating social inequalities as much as for vocational differentiation, and the educational preparations of an intellectual minority. (Stroobant 1978)⁶⁷
- . Official and school guidance agencies were almost non-existent influences in providing vocational information and guidance to early school leavers. (Stroobant 1978)⁶⁸

A second study for the Commission on *Outcomes of Schooling: Aspects of Success and Failure* was sub-titled *Poverty, Education and Adolescents* (Wright, Headlam, Ozolius and Fitzgerald 1978)⁶⁹. This was an analysis of the correlation between poverty and school aspirations, but contained documentation on early leaving and sex differentials operating in Australia. Girls were more affected than were boys by poverty, socio-economic status, and rural origin. In addition, the study reported that fewer job opportunities were available to girls who left school early (at Form 4 or Year 10). The internalisation of sex-typed social attitudes by girls themselves was evident. Girls were less ambitious, more concerned with failure, less single-minded, more self-deprecating. Where girls were found to show ambition, this was usually modified by the desire to do something useful and to be person-oriented. In terms of leaving patterns for the sexes, females in this study tended to stay at school longer than males and more gained the Higher School Certificate. Yet the occupational plans of females were depressed when compared with those of males. A complex of factors was perceived by Wright et al to be operative in this process of educational and occupational decision-making for females:

More subtle yet pervasive societal and familial pressures come to bear on females to condition them for a dependent role. Parents were slightly less happy to support their daughter's education than that of their sons and expressed somewhat lower and less defined ambitions for them. But the most overwhelming evidence pointing to likely future poverty lies in the character and attitudes of the women themselves. Compared with males, they appear more passive and dependent, evince lower self-esteem, feel more powerless and fatalistic; have lower expectations and ambitions, hazier goals and less future-orientation. ... The majority of female respondents have been socialised into a role which often carries with it 'second-class' dimensions. (Wright et al 1978)⁷¹

This linking of female vulnerability with poverty also appears in Behrens' case studies. Another dimension is the different value placed by families on daughters' aspirations, compared with sons. A number of case studies were included to provide some illustration of the perspectives of youth on their success and failure. These revealed that females differed markedly in their success strivings from males. The inadequacy of schooling in the areas of relationships, curriculum choices, opportunities for participation in decision-making and vocational guidance were again marked. Females in particular received little assistance via vocational guidance. In their analysis of female leavers in the workforce, Wright et al (1978)⁷¹ noted a number of sex differences: the role of people and personal relationships significantly affected the job satisfaction of girls; girls were less goal-centred and work-centred, and less dependent on work as a means of defining their identity and worth; the lives of females in the private and public domains were more interconnected and overlapping; women at work were mainly in supervised roles rather than supervisory ones; the nature of most female occupations offered little scope for advancement. In conclusion, the researchers made a number of cogent policy recommendations based on the principles articulated by the young people themselves. These included: core subjects for basic skills; a wider range of electives open equally to boys and girls; action-oriented projects; 'booster' experiences for enlarging the horizons and raising the esteem of girls; awareness-arousing programs. In addition, suggestions were advanced for making work more satisfying for youth by restructuring existing jobs, creating para-professional work, establishing a comprehensive system of part-time work, and creating opportunities within industries for on-the-job training and upgrading. These strategies, if adopted, would certainly enhance the life chances of early female leavers.

SUMMARY

This chapter analysed the major Australian studies which focused specifically on early leavers. The first, by Rosier (1978)⁷³, was a very significant national study on retentivity at age 16. Personal variables at age 14 were found to be the most powerful predictors of school leaving decisions. The other factors in order of direct effect were Age 16 Personal Variables, School Environment and Family Environment. Overall retention rates were higher for males than for females, although females scored more highly on School Environment variables. This study attributes more significance to personal and school variables than to home environment variables. The question that arises is whether school then is turning students off, thereby encouraging them to leave early. Although home variables were not the most significant block in the path analyses, the significance of socio-economic origin on the decision to stay or leave was clearly evident. In terms of scores on school variables, females score more highly, i.e. they are most committed to schooling. Why, then, do they leave earlier than males?

The suggestion by Rosier that 'general community attitudes to the education of girls' may be the key to understanding the higher rate of early leaving among females.

The studies by Poole (1978)⁷³ and Poole & Jones (1976)⁷⁴ indicated that early leavers left because they disliked school, found it irrelevant to their job plans, and often could not cope with it. In analytical terms, these findings add weight to Rosier's findings namely that schooling variables seem to be important in influencing the leaving decision. The most important variables for predicting staying or leaving in Poole's study were: educational expectations at age 14, parents' perceived job aspirations for students, educational expectations and aspirations, academic achievement motivation and students' own job aspiration. One unusual result was that the self-esteem of leavers was no different from that of the stayers. Additional aspects to emerge from the Poole and Jones study were the inadequacy of careers advice for early leavers; the absence of sex differences in terms of numbers of actual leavers; and the belief by most early leavers that the decision to leave was the right one.

An analysis of a small selection of case studies of early female leavers yielded a richness of insight, however limited, which complemented the other studies of early leaving. Unfortunately, although two of the three studies described above did consider sex as a dimension of early leaving, no powerful explanations of what differentiates early female leavers emerged. The relationships drawn between sex and retentivity were fairly weak, except for Rosier's finding that overall, and in certain States in particular, more males stayed at school after age 16 than did females. This pattern is not consistent, however, with the State and general leaver statistics discussed in Chapter 2. Since Rosier's data was collected in 1970 (and 1972) there may be a 'dated-data' factor operating in 1978. There are no apparent sex differences in retentivity, except for a cross-over in some States with more females remaining at school. Whatever the reason, for the purposes of this review it would be misleading to assume that the proportion of early female leavers is markedly different from that of early leaving males. Retention rates as such paint only a very limited picture of the social and educational forces operating in the education of girls.

The case studies reveal several interesting aspects which did not arise in data analyses on the early leaver studies, e.g. an awareness of the limitations to one's job opportunities because one is female; a tendency to be used as cheap domestic help; and personal vulnerability in terms of crime, moral risk, truancy. The case study approach may lead to the most useful insights into the causes of early female leaving yet to emerge in Australia. The research team currently engaged in the Schools Commission Special Projects (Innovations) Program, project entitled *Disadvantaged Early Leavers*⁷⁵ is well placed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the causes of early

female leaving and this should be forthcoming shortly. In addition, the study by Poole and Lowe (in progress) on the differentiated profiles of early male and female stayers and leavers should provide not only more detailed information on how early female leavers differ, but also whether in effect they do differ. Could it be, for example, that the major difference is between the 'stayers' and the 'leavers' rather than between males and females. One could anticipate, if staying is the major difference, that male and female stayers will be more alike than female stayers and female leavers. On the other hand, it could be that personal variables which have been found to be powerful in Rosier's study may so mitigate against the realisation of female potential, that female stayers and leavers may be more alike and the male stayers and leavers more dissimilar. These and several other questions need to be answered before any definitive profile of early female leavers can be constructed. Certainly the studies reported in this chapter allow no sharp comparisons to be drawn. Also, the several studies on adolescents which were included in this chapter highlight major sex differentials in the field of early leavers which need closer scrutiny. In particular, school curricula (options and relevance) need to be monitored and career guidance facilities enlarged (Connell et al (1975)⁷⁶ and Wright et al (1978)⁷⁷ if early female leavers are to be equipped for the world of work. Taken in conjunction with studies discussed in Chapter 4, however, it could be that a complex of factors (e.g. socio-economic status, ethnicity, rurality, personal competence, school commitment) are powerful forces in the lives of both male and female adolescents, although already there is evidence emerging (e.g. Connell et al 1975)⁷⁸ which suggests early female leavers are most at risk.

CHAPTER 6

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LEAVING: REGIONAL STUDIES

In the last few years a number of regional studies on aspects of school leaving have appeared. These investigations have focused on the resources, facilities and opportunities available for school leavers in inner-city regions and in rural areas. To some extent they are case studies of school leavers in a particular community context. In particular, they highlight the transition from school to work, not only in relation to the personal resources and achievements of school leavers themselves, but also in terms of community resources which may, or may not, be able to locate school leavers into existing work structures. The emphasis on female leavers within these studies is not marked. Yet, to the extent that regional factors impinge on all school leavers, then the studies do contribute to an understanding of the pressures on females in the particular regions discussed. The Queensland rural study by McGaw et al (1975),¹ for example, indicated how restricted and sex-specific job opportunities were in the country centres they studied. The question arises as to whether this same pattern emerges from regional studies in Victoria (the Gippsland Regional Study² and the Bendigo Study³) and in Tasmania (the Huon Valley Study⁴). These particular rural studies are discussed briefly below, in an attempt to determine more fully the opportunities for, or barriers against, equality of educational opportunity for male and female leavers.

It is not only rural regions which are the concern of the present chapter. It will be recalled that research by Knight (1975)⁵ raised a number of important issues regarding the educational needs of inner-city females, especially those of migrant origin. There was, however, no way of determining from that study whether the factors operating in that community discriminated against girls, or against early leavers in inner-city areas generally. Two studies on inner-city leavers (both located in urban Melbourne, Victoria) compliment Knight's and introduce a special focus of their own, in the case of Kiraly and Malley (1978),⁶ it is a concern with usage by leavers of technical and further education (TAFE) and, for Tinney et al (1974)⁷, it is a sympathetic understanding of the luck of the game for a small sample of inner-city leavers. These added dimensions are considered below, together with a contrast between leavers in rural areas and leavers in inner-city areas.

THE RURAL STUDIES

Central Gippsland Regional Study: Students' Intentions Survey (1977)

This survey was conducted jointly by the Victorian Town and Country Planning Board and the Gippsland Regional Office of the Department of Education. It sought to obtain detailed information on the intentions of potential leavers in Gippsland concerning their post-school intentions. Two major policy thrusts were behind the survey: 'planning for the future of Gippsland, by identifying the major characteristics of potential new entrants to the labour force in the area and also the possible future migration patterns of young people now living in the area'; and 'to assist the Education Department in its curriculum planning for schools in Gippsland'.

To obtain these broad objectives, three specific concerns were identified: (a) to explore, in the context of Gippsland, the relationship between the post-school intentions of students and a range of demographic and social factors which might influence students' choices of what they wished to do after leaving school; (b) to identify the factors which influence students' choices of jobs and/or careers, including any full or part-time course of study they might seek to undertake; and (c) to identify the extent to which students in Gippsland wish or intend to pursue their chosen job and/or career in Gippsland. (*Central Gippsland Regional Study 1977*).⁸

The sample included all students in the fourth, fifth and sixth forms (Years 9-12), at non-government secondary schools and government high and technical schools in the Gippsland Region, plus a 25 per cent sample of third form students at the same schools.

As to school leaving intentions, both males and females intended in the main to leave in either fifth or sixth form (Years 11 and 12). Interestingly enough, the proportion of girls intending to leave in sixth form (Year 12) (54.8 per cent) was higher than that for boys (35.7 per cent). As to post-school employment nearly one in two boys intended to take up an apprenticeship (43.5 per cent) compared with less than one in ten girls (6.5 per cent). More girls, however, intended to pursue post-secondary education full-time (56.6 per cent girls, 27.2 per cent boys). More girls intending to move directly from school to work planned to leave after fifth form (Year 11) (50.4 per cent girls and 36 per cent boys).

Concerning the specifics of jobs sought, there were marked sex differences. Boys nominated a wide range of options as their career preferences, a breadth evident also in choice of apprenticeships. Similarly, boys intending to pursue full-time courses displayed a wide range of course options. Five occupational categories - clerical workers, farmers, tradesmen, service workers, and armed service personnel - were

nominated by 60 boys. In contrast about half of the girls in each post-secondary intention category chose occupations in traditionally female areas. Of those that chose apprenticeships 48.2 per cent chose hairdressing; of those that chose full-time courses 34 per cent chose teaching and 21 per cent chose nursing; and in the 'work' category, clerical work was the choice of 50.6 per cent of girls.

An examination of the employment status of parents revealed an interesting sex-related factor for post-school intentions. A much higher proportion of girls whose father had no job intended to leave school after fourth or fifth form (Years 10 and 11) compared with girls whose father had a job (51.5 per cent vs 31.1 per cent). That is to say, unemployment of the father may be an important determinant of length of education for girls. This was not the case for boys - indeed data tabled suggested that 'whether or not the student's father had a job has very little influence on the time at which boys in particular leave school'. Trends reported in other studies on socio-economic level and retentivity were again evident for boys and girls in this data.

The second of the analyses focused on aspects of job choice such as types of apprenticeships pursued, or the course or job that potential leavers indicated they would like to do; where students intended to pursue their career, factors influencing decisions on career and availability of careers information. On the question of apprenticeships, three recurring features on the Australian scene emerged: those students (boys and girls) entering apprenticeships intend to leave school earlier than those entering full-time work or post-school education; boys entering apprenticeships nominated a wide selection of trade areas whereas girls chose narrow, sex-specific areas such as hairdressing; girls entering apprenticeships usually stayed on a year longer at school than their male equivalents.

A trend emerging in rural areas is that the majority of male and female leavers (in this study 70-80 per cent) want to learn their trade in their own town. More females than males comprise the group who want to move away from home to learn their chosen trade. A finding unique to the present study was that males and females appeared to use a wide range of sources when seeking job information and that the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) was perceived as a greater source of information than the Victorian Industrial Training Commission. The question arises as to why leavers in this region had access to adequate careers information when most leavers cite this as a major deficiency; and why the CES was used when other studies suggest that formal agencies are not widely used by leavers.

Turning next to post-school educational intentions, there are increasingly well documented sex differentiated trends. The

overwhelming choice by girls was for courses leading to nursing and teaching, a few chose art, paramedical studies and secretarial studies. Interestingly, teaching was also the course most frequently chosen by boys who intended to do full-time study. Notwithstanding, a greater breadth of choice in full-time courses was again evident for males in this study, they mainly chose engineering, pure and applied science, other specialist sciences, commerce and economics and accounting, but a few chose arts, medicine, paramedical studies and architecture.

The holding power of the region for those wanting to do courses was no where near as high as that for those wanting to enter apprenticeships. Some 52 per cent of boys and 55.9 per cent of girls intending to do a full-time course intended to leave the district and study in Melbourne. This is partly explained by the non-availability of some courses in the region, for example, law, medicine, paramedical studies and dentistry. Where courses were available locally, for example, in accountancy, commerce/economics and engineering and nursing, nearly one in two students intended to pursue that course in the region. The unusual pattern was that 77 per cent of boys and 83 per cent of girls intending to become teachers planned to move away from Gippsland to do that course.

While this trend of school leavers in rural areas to move away from home to pursue post-secondary education is well-established in Australian research, little has been done to investigate the inflow back to rural regions after the completion of courses. The present study surveyed intentions relating to return, and between 50 to 60 per cent of both boys and girls in most occupation groups indicated a desire to return. The proportion of girls was lower than that for boys, except in the area of teaching. Such intentions need monitoring at a later stage to see if the anticipated patterns of return eventuate.

Potential leavers were more informed as to courses available at University and Colleges of Advanced Education than they were of courses at technical colleges. Why this should be so merits consideration if a broad range of options is to be presented to male and female leavers.

What of those students intending to go direct to work on leaving school? For females, most intended to enter traditional female occupations - clerical, service and sales. In contrast, male leavers were seeking a much wider range of jobs, although trades, process work and labouring were most frequently mentioned. Reasons for job choice by both sexes included liking the work and the remuneration, although girls more frequently stated 'I want to help other people in my work'. Of those potential leavers moving directly to work, at least half intend to remain in the region. More girls than boys voiced this intention.

The report of the survey concludes with a summary of the implications for Gippsland of the findings. The first implication concerns anticipated substantial movements of leavers

from the region, particularly those seeking post-secondary education, in the future. This is partly the result of non-availability of courses, but it reflects a consistent concern of rural areas which progressively lose talented youth to urban centres.

A second implication concerns the patterns of male and female employment in the area. Historically, these have been distinctive and sex-typed. The intentions of leavers in this survey show no marked divergence from this engrained pattern. The survey states:

One interesting feature of the pattern of post-school intentions revealed by the survey is that it would appear that this tradition of females entering certain occupations 'reserved' for females will continue. (*Central Gippsland Regional Study* 1977) ¹⁰

As to apprenticeships, doubt was expressed as to whether the region could meet the aspirations of the large number of male leavers who wished to take up apprenticeships in Gippsland; and whether male leavers were conversant with the relative decline in income advantage accruing to qualified tradesmen.

Overall, the study reflects a number of trends which are pertinent to leavers generally, e.g. higher age of leaving intentions and the lack of marked sex-differences in retentivity; the sex-typed pursuit of jobs and further education. At the same time, however, some uniquely rural dimensions emerge - the loss to the region of leavers pursuing selected post-secondary courses and to a lesser degree, those entering selected jobs; the employment structure of the region remaining somewhat static and the likely decline in the availability of apprenticeships.

The Huon Valley Study: Opportunities and Educational Priorities in a Tasmanian country Area. Behrens et al (1978) ¹⁰

This study was a descriptive, in-depth study of the educational provisions and outcomes for potential school leavers in a small country area. Its value lies in its follow-up study of school leavers from the area in search of work. In addition, it provided added documentation of the 'unequal outcomes between country and city children which would seem to have a deeper origin in the Australian social structure' (Behrens 1978).¹¹

Part of the survey involved a follow-up study of three groups of school leavers from schools in the area during 1973, 1975 and 1976. Descriptive information on the present and future economic and population trends of the Valley are presented in detail. One disturbing statistic is that, in November 1976, more than a third of persons aged 15 to 19 living in the Huon Valley were out of work:

This figure is profoundly disturbing and indicative not only of problems with local employment opportunities but also of the need for support structures to assist those young people who are unemployed. It should be noted that this is not just, or even primarily a problem of unemployment among school leavers. (Behrens 1978) ¹²

This highlights the almost crisis state of unemployment in the Huon Valley, as well as the plight of the young. Interestingly, rates of unemployment are similar for men and women, except at Esperance where 15 per cent of women, compared with nine per cent of men are unemployed. The occupational structure of the Huon Valley is distinctly biased towards farming with few clerical and skilled positions available. Semi-skilled and manual labour figure prominently. In comparison with the male workforce in Australia generally, the occupational structure in the Huon Valley is restricted. Also, in comparison with national figures, the participation in the labour force of married women in the Huon Valley is low.

The significance of this analysis of economic structure for school-leavers in the region is that it indicated 'restricted employment opportunity and exposure to only a limited range of occupations and the limited range of occupations for young people in the Huon', (Behrens 1978).¹³ A consequence of this is unemployment or movement from the area by leavers looking for jobs. Female leavers in the region clearly face very restricted job opportunities. Other factors operate for girls, however, which are linked to traditional patterns of sex roles:

The relatively small group of Huon mothers with non-seasonal jobs may well reflect traditional country attitudes towards women working, or it may be that in some cases mothers are required to help the family business, such as farms or shops. It also seems very likely, however, that there is a shortage in the Huon of jobs which are available to women, such as shop assistants, bank clerks and typists. Most of the semi and unskilled jobs available in the Huon are associated with rural activities geared towards males, while many of those which are available for women, such as working in the factories are only temporary. For the majority of girls leaving school in Year 9 or 10 there is little option to finding work out of the Valley. (Behrens 1978)¹⁴

This study reflects trends, then, which are similar to those reported by McGaw et al (1975)¹⁵ for rural areas in Queensland, namely that restricted and sex-typed job options for female leavers. One departure from the McGaw et al study, however, is in the area of provision of educational services. There was no evidence in the Huon Valley survey to suggest that rural schools were in any way disadvantaged in terms of resources. To the degree then that leavers in rural areas are disadvantaged, the key factors may be quality of environment and social and economic structures of communities rather than inferior educational provisions. The only service lacking was in the area of technical and further education. The marked contrasts in staff provisions and the age distributions of teachers in rural and urban Queensland which were revealed in the McGaw et al (1975)¹⁶ survey were not in evidence in the Huon Valley. Obviously the distances in rural Tasmania, in particular those between Hobart and the Huon Valley are of a different order to those of rural Queensland. Rural leavers in this region, therefore, were not disadvantaged in terms of financial and material resources or in staff provision compared with urban schools in Tasmania. The researchers argue, therefore, that 'factors outside the school are most likely to

influence educational outcomes in the Huon Valley. These factors are probably deeply ingrained in the social structure of a rural area like the Huon Valley and are likely to reflect the attitudes of parents and the community in general towards education'. (Behrens 1978) ¹⁷

Educational outcomes in the Huon Valley were assessed in three ways: retentivity in Years 10 and 11; School Certificate results in four curricula areas - English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science - for 1974, 1975 and 1976; and student performance in the Tasmanian literacy and numeracy testing programs. The results were indicative of unequal educational outcomes in a rural area; 'educational outcomes in the Huon schools are clearly lower than schools in the more urban Eastern Shore and West Tamar regions, and in many cases, are also below the Tasmanian averages' (Behrens 1978).¹⁸ Retention rates to Year 10 were low, as is the general rule in country areas in Tasmania. Retentivity in the Huon Valley was considerably lower than in two urban comparison centres (Eastern Shore and West Tamar). Only one in eight students complete Year 11, compared with a Tasmanian average of one in four (or one in three in Eastern Shore). Huon Valley students, at age 14, scored significantly lower on basic tests of literacy and numeracy than the State average. A lower percentage than the State average, achieved Level 3 passes in four curricula areas. Attainment levels for 14 year olds in urban high schools were higher than those in rural areas. Indeed, the author claims that 'over one third of the Huon Valley 14 year olds can be considered at risk in terms of numeracy skills.

Without such basic equipment for competence, these rural youth seem to be particularly vulnerable during a period of high youth unemployment, particularly as they are located in a rural community facing economic crisis. The author alludes to the difficulties involved in trying to raise the level of participation in schooling in rural areas. They perceive the problems as complex and involving changes in the attitudes of parents, students and the general community.

The transition from school to work was also a concern of this survey. Results indicated that the aspirations of Year 10 students who were terminating were generally restricted, a finding congruent with other studies in Australian rural communities. The occupations pursued by school leavers fairly closely paralleled those of parents in the Huon Valley. The author stresses, as do most writers in this field in Australia, the need for more comprehensive vocational guidance. Early school leavers were seen to be at a disadvantage when entering the work-force and they appeared to be over-represented in the unemployed group. Overall, a majority of school leavers had to travel outside the Huon Valley for employment.

The study, shows the additional dilemma that rural residence can produce for school leavers. The authors stress two particular problems: the existence of structural differences between city and country schools and 'access'. In the first of these, it was found that children from district schools were

more likely to leave school early, be confined to unskilled jobs and suffer unemployment; in the second, access to education beyond Year 10 involves extensive travel to and from school and this in turn becomes a disincentive. The reduced pattern of attainment by rural youth in this study could not, however, be attributed to resource provision deficiencies, a significant finding in itself. The authors concluded by making a number of recommendations for improving the education of rural youth. These included specialist provisions, for example, remedial centres, raising parent and teacher expectations, improved bus facilities; creating support structures for the school-work transition; new methods of delivering educational services such as specialist support staff to clusters of schools in guidance, social work, etc., and the development of technical and further education and adult education. A number of priority needs were identified within the areas outlined above, they were home-school liaison officers and remedial education. The suggestions made in these priority areas seem particularly appropriate and their execution urgent if rural leavers of both sexes are to be no longer disadvantaged in comparison with their urban counterparts.

The Bendigo Survey Volek (1977) 19

School leavers in 1976 were surveyed in 11 secondary schools in Bendigo. Complete or near complete lists of students who left during the last three months of 1976 were provided by the schools, together with address lists. Even in a well-defined community such as Bendigo, it was difficult to obtain accurate estimates of school leavers because of perennial features such as: leavers who returned to repeat the final year; leavers who enrolled in another school to continue their studies; and leavers who, finding themselves out of work, returned to school.

The number of leavers identified in the Bendigo study therefore fluctuated between 800 and 830. Except for those leavers who left the area and were sent stamped addressed envelopes in which to return their questionnaires, the research group planned to interview all leavers. In all, only 500 students were questioned. Some 300 could not be reached due to resource limitations and difficulty in establishing contact. After discarding incomplete or inconsistent responses, the leavers' sample equalled 449 (60 per cent of the estimated population of school leavers).

The survey centred on leavers' plans for further education; their employment experiences; their contacts with vocational guidance and their personal assessments of schooling. Some 35 per cent of the sample indicated that they were continuing their education in 1977 (34 per cent males; 38 per cent females). A slightly higher proportion of females expected to undertake post-secondary education, but this was usually non-tertiary (e.g. commercial studies). Only five per cent of the sample, equal numbers of males and females, attended a university, this was interpreted by the researchers as another instance of rural disadvantage. Within the total pattern of post-secondary education, traditional male/female divisions in courses of study were evident: male leavers in the Bendigo College of

Advanced Education opted for engineering (no females were in this course) and significantly more female leavers entered teaching courses:

Unless there is a sudden change in the next few years we cannot expect to have our cars repaired by young female mechanics, but our children, in primary schools at least, will continue to be taught mainly by female teachers. (Volek 1977) ²⁰

The numbers of males and females enrolled in science were approximately the same, however, and this shows some shift into sciences by females.

What of those school leavers who were employed? Females in the 'clerical' and 'sales' category outnumbered males; in the 'unskilled labourers' category, males outnumbered females, as they did in the 'skilled tradesmen' category (i.e. jobs involving training or apprenticeships). Most significant was the finding that only 56 per cent of female leavers as against 66 per cent of male leavers who wanted employment were in fact employed. Of the male school leavers, 30 per cent were serving apprenticeships but no such high proportion of female leavers were working and gained in skills and long-term earning potential. Only four per cent of females were serving in apprenticeships. The interpretation given by the researchers to this sex difference as indicating that 'male school leavers tend to look for jobs which would lead them into a qualified, skilled occupation, whereas just over one quarter of all working female school leavers were in sales jobs and one quarter in clerical jobs'. (Volek 1977) ²² The results could just as easily be interpreted as an absence of comparable job opportunities for female leavers.

Personal contacts were the mechanism by which most school leavers in this study obtained employment, followed by Commonwealth Employment Service and newspaper advertisements. The study suggested that, although more jobs were available for male leavers than for female leavers, female school leavers put more effort into their job-hunts. Employed leavers of both sexes used a wider net of resources than those in the unemployed group to obtain jobs, which raises interesting questions about the personal resources of school leavers and the influence of this on their ability to obtain a job. Furthermore, of the unemployed leavers, more females than males were prepared to accept any kind of employment.

Where work experience programs operated in Bendigo schools, the opportunity for boys to participate was apparently greater than for girls. The need to improve work experience programs for all school leavers was argued by the researchers, particularly if the issue of unemployment of leavers is to be given due attention. One in four school leavers felt that schools were not providing adequate assistance in career guidance. More male than female leavers used guidance facilities in schools, the converse being that the career needs of girls were given less attention than those of boys.

In this Bendigo sample, the process of 'dropping out' started at Form 2 (Year 8), but the report states that it was high enough in Forms 4, 5 and 6 (Years 10, 11 and 12) to warrant detailed

investigation into the causes. Although more females than males completed Form 6 (Year 12), the reason could be that Form 5 (Year 11) is the terminal year at technical schools and since more males than females attend technical schools, they cannot continue beyond that level. The report, although a preliminary one and highly descriptive and fragmented, provides further evidence of recurring themes in the lives of female leavers compared with their male counterparts.

THE URBAN STUDIES

School Leavers of the Inner Urban, Melbourne Central Region, 1977, Kiraly and Malley (1978) 22

This survey was commissioned by the Central Regional Council for Technical and Further Education (TAFE). The study, designed to investigate the technical and further education intentions of school leavers, was located in the Central Region of the State of Victoria. The transition from school to work or to further study was a key feature of this leavers' study. Comparisons of leavers within the region were made on the basis of school type, grade level and sex.

Data were gathered from the population of 'potential' school leavers in the region (i.e. all students enrolled in Year 8 or beyond) in four school types (government high schools, technical schools and non-government Catholic and independent schools). A questionnaire sent to school principals was used to obtain population data on potential leavers. A random selection from a proportional stratification of school types formed the sampling frame for a detailed self-report questionnaire administered to 'potential' leavers. To survey unemployed school leavers who had left a school in the region within the last three years, contact was made with unemployed youth groups in the Region, the Youth Organisation for the Unemployed (YOU) and the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. Approximately one hundred young people were identified and questionnaires were administered to them.

The report on the study provides useful baseline descriptive data on 'potential' and actual school leavers within an inner city region. Although the findings cannot be generalised they do provide a valuable regional case study of potential school leavers and unemployed school leavers.

What broad general leaver statistics were revealed in the study? Firstly, very few females in the region attended technical schools - a factor of considerable significance since a major aim of the study was to consider how to make technical and further education more available to potential school leavers. Retention rates by school type again showed that more students enrolled at non-government independent schools proceed beyond Year 10 (i.e. not leaving early). Retentivity was smallest in technical schools - fewer technical school students than students from any other school sector proceeded from Year 9 to Year 11. A particularly interesting finding related to sex differences in retentivity by school type was that females at

technical schools, non-government Catholic and Independent schools tended to stay on longer than males, while the reverse situation occurred in high schools. Overall retentivity to Year 12 was lowest in high schools, highest in the Catholic and Independent schools. In addition, proportionately more females in Catholic schools completed Year 12 than did females from other school types. Unfortunately, no suggestions or speculations concerning these fascinating trends in retentivity were included in the report.

The second stage of the study was an investigation of school leaving intentions. The majority of students (64 per cent) reported that they intended to complete Year 12 before leaving. Significantly more students from independent schools than from technical schools intended to proceed to Year 12 (87 per cent vs 14 per cent respectively). Intention to proceed to the terminal year of schooling (Year 12) was consistently higher at Independent schools, at any given grade level. Most technical school students intended to leave before or at Year 11. A sex differential in school leaving intentions was evident with more females than males intending to proceed to Year 12 (69 per cent vs 56 per cent respectively). In addition, males were more uncertain as to when they would leave school than were females.

The study then reported on the indicated job paths or study choices of school leavers. As has been found in a number of recent adolescent studies in Australia, the aspiration levels of 'potential' leavers were high - 74 per cent of those surveyed aspired to 'professional' jobs which required further education at a university or a college of advanced education. Some 17 per cent of students displayed a preference for a job which entailed further training at a TAFE college. Students in technical schools were the most undecided as to job paths. Where they had made such a decision, technical students opted mainly for skilled trades or technician jobs. Some 60 per cent of students in Independent schools intended to pursue a 'professional' career path, and about half intended to enter professional science areas. A similar proportion (58 per cent) of students in Catholic schools anticipated 'professional' careers but with an orientation towards professional service areas. By Year 12 most students (73 per cent) intended to pursue careers requiring a university of a CAE credential. An encouraging finding was that the majority of students at each intended grade level of leaving school had an accurate concept of the amount of study required to achieve their preferred job paths. More females than males intended to pursue 'professional' careers. Whether the reality matched such intentions, however, is an issue alluded to in the report, and one which needs to be kept in mind since other studies such as McGaw et al (1977)²³ indicate that females often receive less education than they would like. Whether intentions are theoretically linked with expectations or aspirations also needs consideration.

An interesting aspect of this study was that students were asked to give an alternative pathway if they could not get into their first job choice or field of study. Students intending to proceed to tertiary study as a first choice chose the

alternative of continuing to study full-time, in a different area. Some 63 per cent of students indicated a willingness to choose an alternative job/study area which would require some form of further education after leaving secondary school, a third of which could be provided by TAFE colleges. Proportionately more males than females indicated that they would proceed to a specific job if their first job or study preference was not attained. More females would proceed to the alternative of continuing study but in a different area from males. For students at government high schools and non-government schools, the preferred alternative was to continue further study but in a different area. This suggests a fairly high commitment to post-secondary education by the leavers in this sample.

The most influential source for careers advice were parents who were generally perceived of as being supportive of students' career choices. The family was also consulted by most students in relation to the school leaving decision. The attitudes of students to school were mainly positive except for those who intended to leave school early. No obvious relationship was found in the study between students' school leaving intentions and the birth-place of father.

The final part of the study was an investigation of the technical and further education needs, or interests, of youth in the region who had left school within the past three years and were now unemployed. The specific aims were: to evaluate how well prepared these leavers were for the 'post-school world'; to gauge their career interests; to tap their attitudes to post-secondary education; and to assess the needs and suitable styles for the delivery of educational services.

The number of unemployed youth totalled approximately 20 per cent of the unemployed in that region. Most of these youths had reasonably favourable attitudes to school although most of them had received little or no careers counselling while at school. Generally schools had not equipped these unemployed leavers with job survival skills, for example how to look for jobs, make out applications and conduct themselves at interviews. Only half had received information on opportunities for further study. Of these unemployed leavers, 36.7 per cent of males and 45.3 per cent of females had already undertaken some form of further study since leaving school. An interesting finding to emerge was that rather than just take any job, the majority of these unemployed leavers would prefer further education or training. These leavers were keen to obtain assistance in choosing a job or course most suited to their own interests and needs. Some 48 per cent of them also wanted to know how to cope with being unemployed. Two-thirds of these unemployed youths expressed an interest in undertaking some form of community service if jobs were not available. Some 60 per cent of these leavers had not heard of TAFE.

Overall, this regional study reflects processes operating in the broader social context. The young have high aspirations -

educational and vocational - but these are increasingly less easy to achieve. The potential role of TAFE in widening the career options of male and female leavers needs to be explored further, particularly when so many unemployed youth are unaware of its existence. Access to careers information and counselling emerges again as a problem confronting male and female leavers. Females emerge as having higher aspirations than males but since there is no reality testing phase, the viability of such high hopes for female leavers remains problematic.

The Luck of the Game - a Study of Inner Suburban School Leavers
Tinney, Benn, O'Neill (1974)²⁴

This small scale study of 34 school leavers in an inner suburban school in Melbourne, Victoria, was designed to examine leavers' attitudes to education and work. Interview techniques were used. The sample was largely migrant (14 born in Australia, nine in Greece, six in Italy, the rest overseas unspecified). Strong family cohesion was evident from students' responses. The leavers felt that the suburb they lived in was satisfactory from both a social and economic perspective. Their values were fairly traditional - the biggest achievement for most girls was seen as raising a family. Only one girl thought achievement lay in work and her capacity to do well. Only four respondents saw their biggest achievement in personal terms (e.g. self-awareness or working with others towards peace). Roles for male leavers were also conventionally defined in terms of business success.

Of the school leavers, eight were studying full-time (seven at tertiary institutions), 15 had done some post-secondary education since leaving school, 11 had not. Most leavers knew about educational service deliveries, e.g. night classes. Not one of these leavers, however, had taken up an apprenticeship. The reasons for this were: fear of being trapped in a trade; higher aspirations; belief that apprenticeships led to menial, poorly paid work. This is the first leaver study examined in which such negative attitudes to the prospects of apprenticeships have been voiced by school leavers.

In this study, the leavers made the decision about when to leave largely without discussion with parents. The main reason given for leaving was that they 'had gone as far as they needed'. None of the group was forced to leave for economic reasons - a recurrent finding in other leaver studies in Australia. The expressed attitudes of the leavers to their leaving decision were mixed but many were 'glad it was over' (N = 12) and only 11 felt they wanted to go on learning. There was some fear evident among these leavers at the prospect of meeting the realities of the world of work. This is not unexpected since so few of the leavers had any real acquaintance with work.

Teachers emerged in this study as the most important influence on students' school progress. This is contrary to most

Australian studies which show that home environment factors are the most critical determinants of school achievement. There were criticisms of the teachers, however:

Rarely did the respondents consider that teachers saw them as individuals with differing backgrounds, needs and capacities ... the students were expected to fit into the courses made available by the school. The clearest illustration of this was the way in which girls were directed into the commercial stream. The assumption that girls 'do commercial' avoids the necessity of making careful assessment. (Tinney et al 1974)²⁵

These decisions (or lack of them) by teachers impinge particularly on the job options of girls. They also highlight the poor quality of vocational counselling available (another recurrent finding in leaver studies in Australia). The situation is exacerbated for early leavers:

The student who aims at professional training and who stays at school longest is more likely to be provided with the means of achieving his goal. The earlier a student leaves school the less likely he is to know what the options are or where his particular skills might lead. (Tinney et al 1974)²⁶

Tinney et al therefore suggest that careers' advice should begin very early in high school, well before students (even the early leavers) decide to leave. Every effort needs to be made, the researchers urge, to assist school leavers in finding employment in the area which interests them.

The age of leaving for the respondents in this study ranged from 14 years (N = 3) to 19 years (N = 3), although the majority left at age 17 years (N = 10). That is, the students in this study were not moving into the workforce as soon as they could legally leave school. Most, on leaving, were ignorant of the world of work. Many who left saw school as having nothing further to offer them in the realm of job training. This was particularly the case with female leavers who had been trained for office work. The move into the workforce, however, usually entailed enhanced self-image and a feeling of independence and adulthood. Many placed a different value on schooling once they were working and saw its instrumental value. Tinney et al advocate a more fluid relationship between school and work so that young people can return and equip themselves with the competences they feel they need, for example, through day release, on the job training and full or part-time return to school. Experience of work while still at school is seen by Tinney et al as a means of easing the transition from school to work. Another strategy suggested is providing for re-entry to education and training after students broaden their horizons through their experiences in the workforce.

None of these leavers was unemployed at the time of interview. The range and type of work in which these students were engaged

are predictable (in terms of other leaver studies). What is surprising, however, is that girls were generally in higher status positions than boys:

The most likely classifications were either clerical and related work (N = 18) or students (N = 8). Girls dominated in both classifications and were more likely to be accepted in higher status jobs than boys. Six out of the eight students and 14 out of the 18 clerical and related workers were female. Only two girls were otherwise employed, one as production officer with a textile firm and the other as a cutter in a clothing factory. (Tinney et al 1974)²⁷

The sex-stereotyped occupational categorisation is familiar, but the status feature is a novel finding. The variety of jobs available to male leavers, however, was greater than that open to females:

Four were employed as clerks, two were students and two had jobs as service workers (one as a steward, the other a window cleaner). The remaining four were employed as a missionary, a process worker, a storeman and a National serviceman, respectively. (Tinney et al 1974)²⁸

Although the jobs of many of these leavers were repetitions and lacking in challenge, these young people saw work as a necessary element in life. Work was particularly valued for the social contacts it structured, as well as for employer appreciation and a sense of newly earned independence. Although their own jobs were perceived as repetitious and boring the young leavers in this study generally had better jobs than those of their parents. Very few leavers apart from early leavers, showed any signs of trying to obtain more interesting employment. Tinney et al interpreted this as lack of confidence in themselves - it may simply have been a desire for stability and security. The early leavers were different however:

They were inclined to fully explore the experience that the job market could offer and moved quickly out of jobs when they were unsatisfactory. It appears that these early leavers had little to lose and everything to gain by changing jobs. Further, when they found a job that suited them, they settled into it quite happily for a number of years. At the same time, they tended to have plans for future improvement and change in their situation. (Tinney et al 1974)²⁹

This forward planning focus of early leavers is unusual in the light of other Australian studies. It may relate to the migrant origin of the sample and the higher aspirations of some migrant groups. The opportunity for such job exploration and future planning by early leavers could well be nil in the current phase of high youth unemployment.

In this study, early leavers were not at a disadvantage in terms of earning capacity. These early leavers were among the most

highly paid in the sample. Tinney et al suggest that this raises questions as to the value of staying on at school. Such questions are being more widely asked in the society at large. Schooling and work highlight discontinuity in life stages with staying on at school not necessarily contributing to one's earning potential, unless tertiary education is planned.

One interesting finding was that the early leavers in this study 'displayed considerable control and competence in their lives, whereas those who stayed on for up to a further three years were often dissatisfied and limited in their choice. There is evidence that gaining the terminal qualification in school provided the basis for a successful future, but staying on without that qualification did not always achieve a great deal'. This is a very challenging finding about the value of schooling for students, since the value of extended schooling as such, particularly in terms of job access and job satisfaction, may be dubious for many school leavers.

The Tinney et al study is valuable for providing in-depth understanding of 34 school leavers. However, the sampling frame was inadequate, the sample too small, the questions too limited to enable firm generalisations to be advanced. Rather a number of interesting trends are reported which add to our understanding of the issues that confront school leavers. Although differences between male and female leavers were discussed in parts of the study, this was not a prime focus. Indeed the study was interested in school leaving youth and their transition to work or further education.

SUMMARY

The studies reported in this chapter highlight contrasts in community resources and structures that are likely to influence the opportunities of male and female leavers. Leavers in rural areas can expect to encounter greater difficulties in obtaining employment than their urban counterparts. The options open to female leavers in rural areas are noticeably more limited than those open to males. The problem seems to be threefold: the aspirations and expectations of girls lie within a narrow range of traditionally designated 'female' occupations; the economic structure of rural communities is such that there is little job diversity and the jobs available are usually skewed towards unskilled, poorly paid categories; thirdly, the value system is often such that female leavers encounter a tradition of the role of woman as wife and mother, with work as an interim activity prior to marriage and with no other role models available, female leavers 'slot in' to existing structures. There is much in the above studies to suggest that early female leavers in rural areas are even more the victims of limited choices than early male leavers.

In the Behrens et al (1978)³⁰ study, in particular, it was interesting to find that the provision of educational services

was more than adequate in rural schools in the Huon Valley. This serves to underline the view that it is the ethos of community values and expectations which presses on school leavers and helps determine their school-leaving and job-decisions. More in-depth analysis of this process of what might be called 'the socialisation of rural achievement and work values' would seem warranted if equality of educational opportunity, as distinct from provision, is to be brought to rural leavers of both sexes.

The relative status of urban leavers in terms of educational and opportunity structures, although enhanced by a more complex and diverse set of options, nevertheless shows that females are at a disadvantage. The almost total exclusion of females from technical education and from apprenticeships remains a cause for concern. In a society where, rightly or wrongly, technology is being increasingly valued by government, female leavers are not participating in the educational and job structures which permit entry into the technocracy. To that degree, they are being excluded from the knowledge structure of a technological society, as well as from its financial and status rewards.

Differentials in opportunity operating against female leavers are particularly disturbing given the high aspirations of girls and the higher retentivity rates of girls, which have become evident in several recent studies. The question is asked whether girls are less able than boys and therefore not succeeding in the key curricula areas which open up job options. The resources of female leavers themselves, however, may not be the major determinant of their life options. A network of social, economic and political factors might be operating which enmesh even the urban female leaver into a web of diminishing choices.

The urban female leaver may not be prepared to cope with the complexity of job choice. Again and again, the inadequacy of careers counselling emerges as a factor detracting from an easy transition from school to work for male and female leavers, in urban and rural contexts. How to achieve a viable support system in the area of vocational education must remain a policy priority if school leavers are to face not only the transition to work, but also the transition to alternative post-secondary roles.

Other themes to emerge from the studies reported above in this chapter relate to social and cultural dimensions of school leaving. In rural and urban areas, retentivity is higher for females who attend non-government schools. This highlights the recurring relationship between socio-economic status and retentivity. Female leavers from higher socio-economic levels remain at school longer and are more likely to pursue post-secondary education. Early female leavers, it could be inferred, are less likely to come from higher socio-economic families.

The Tinney et al (1974)³¹ study provides insight into retention patterns of migrants living in an inner city area. To some extent, there is similarity with the findings of Knight (1975)³² concerning limited options, and sex-stereotyped occupational choices. A more traditional family-based role for female leavers emerges from the interviews, however. Somewhat surprisingly, the female leavers in this study who were employed were in better paid jobs than their male counterparts. The early leavers in this study also showed initiative in trying out jobs to determine how much they liked or were satisfied with them. Information of this sort suggests that some of the large leaver studies which use survey and testing techniques may be underestimating the personal resources of early leavers that appear to emerge from in-depth interviewing. There is a need, it would seem, for follow-up interviews in the survey studies, to broaden the understandings of educators, employers, and policy-makers as to how school leavers perceive their schooling and the world of work. To use only survey analysis might be to miss the essence of the problem; to use only small-scale interviews might lead to the limited understanding of the men from Hindustani, who being blind and feeling the several parts of the elephant (tail, ear, trunk, tusk, knee and side-shin) were still firm in their conviction from their phenomenological perspective, that they alone knew what the elephant was really like (a rope, a fan, a snake, a spear, a tree and a wall respectively). It will be recalled that the reason for looking at early female leaving within the context of leaving studies generally, and within the context of sex differentials operating for both terminal and early leavers, was partly to avoid the myopia of the men of Hindustani. Notwithstanding, dimensions of sex differences in the opportunity structures of leavers - both educational and vocational - keep recurring in the literature, regardless of the standpoint of the researchers. The degree to which they become manifest in the workforce is explored in the next chapter. Studies of leavers entering the world of work, or about to move from school to work, might dispel concerns shown above about the curtailed occupational options of female leavers, or, on the other hand, they might further confirm the emerging picture of disadvantage operating for female leavers in Australian society.

CHAPTER 7

SCHOOL LEAVERS ENTERING THE WORKFORCE OR NON-WORK

Increasingly, studies on school leavers are not focussing solely, or indeed mainly, on aspects of schooling and the achievements of potential and actual leavers. The concern now is with what happens to leavers once their schooling has ended. This trend has been evident in most of the major national and regional studies that have been examined. It is a question of focus as to whether studies look at the schooling of leavers, the transition from school to work, or the experiences of leavers in the workforce. The same issues keep emerging in all these studies. Has school prepared leavers for the world of work? What vocational guidance was available to leavers? Did leavers use guidance facilities? What resources did leavers take with them into the workforce; (for example, by way of attitudes, skills and personal competences? What occupations do leavers pursue? Are they satisfied with their choices? What of those leavers who proceed to post-secondary education? What are their long-term educational plans? The questions that are not being asked, however, concern leavers who cannot find work, and who do not wish to proceed to post-secondary education. What, if anything, has school done for them, and what, if anything, is society doing to locate them into its structures? From a recent symposium on youth unemployment held at the Academy of Social Sciences, Canberra (1977),¹ the suggestion was made that schools must now prepare youth to 'opt for non-careers or uncareers'. It was seen as imperative that unemployed identities were not simply allocated to those who failed or were failed by the schooling system, so that no real change was made to the overall distribution of status and power in the community.

If the notion of uncareer or non-career is to provide an acceptable alternative in schools and in people's life styles, it should involve a genuine choice for young people and should not simply constitute a change in how we label the futures of those who are now affectively excluded from the schooling system and from jobs. (*Youth Unemployment 1977*)².

The expectation that youth could choose 'uncareers' is not congruent, however, with the fabric of Australian society in which paid work largely defines status and identity:

Western society defines a person by what he does - if you do nothing your value to society appears on the face of it to be minimal. To frustration and despair, therefore, has to be added the worst psychological depression of them all - low self-esteem. (*Youth Unemployment 1977*)³.

Early female leavers were seen by the participants in that symposium as being extremely vulnerable to unemployment.

The problems lie not only in the dichotomy between work and non-work. There is an ethos of depressed aspirations for youth. Leaders in educational fields are becoming the mouth pieces of politicians who wish to curb the costs of post-secondary education by urging youth to abandon their dreams of a tertiary education; or, on having achieved degrees, young graduates have been warned that they are no longer as employable or as assured of traditional careers. The consequences have been that:

Many have to abandon long held plans to follow this or that career and settle for anything. There is now a generation of people destined to spend their lives as unskilled workers and ... because of increasing technology their long term prospects are poor. (*Youth Unemployment 1977*)⁴.

The focus on school leavers, therefore, needs to shift from school to the world of work. Schools in Australian society have undergone enormous self-criticism and analysis over the past decades. True, there has been little evidence of structural change, but curricula developments and the design of learning spaces have reflected aspects of open and progressive education. There have been few signs of change, however, in attitudes of employers to school leavers (other than a hardening of attitudes against them). Nor have there been initiatives taken in recent times by governments (of either complexion) to restructure occupational opportunities for youth. It seems that the school has moved some small distance towards meeting the intellectual and social needs of youth. The community at large, however, seems inert or ignorant towards the problems of unemployed youth or of youth whose horizons have been narrowed by the current structural unemployment. Gone is the virtue of individual striving ('Tis in ourselves, that we are thus or thus'). Rather youth seems inexorably locked into structural unemployment and destined to be the new 'poor class' of the society.

Only one of the studies presented below Wassel (1976)⁵ deals specifically with problems of unemployed school leavers, but it in no way points to the magnitude of the problem as have a number of recent symposiums and conferences. The problems and prospects of leavers generally as they anticipate and actually move into the workforce are well presented in studies by Behrens (1978)⁶, Musgrave and Wind (1978)⁷, Baldock and Langford (1977)⁸ and Wright and Headlam (1976)⁹. These problems are explored within a general context of concern for what happens to school leavers, however, there is a general lack of concern with the particular difficulties encountered by females leaving school and entering the world of work and this is again evident in the studies outlined below

This study was also part of the series undertaken by the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. It was a follow-up study of school leavers in Tasmania over a sixteen year period. Its prime concerns were the school experiences and work history of 1500 men and women, and these were examined retrospectively from 1959. Only aspects relating to work are presented here since the schooling dimensions were not dissimilar from those reported by Behrens (1978) or others in studies on the disadvantages faced by rural and urban leavers. This study is particularly valuable because of its longitudinal component which follows school leavers through their first job and along the line of successive careers. In addition, the study examines 'vertical inequalities' in that it considers the relationship between social advantage in the Tasmanian community and opportunities in both schooling and employment Behrens (1978) 11. It also examines 'horizontal' inequalities in terms of rural/urban residence.

In Behren's analysis of the job histories of leavers, a number of striking features emerge: up to age 23, more than half the persons in professional and skilled manual occupations had followed a single occupation. Nearly two-fifths of leavers who entered semi-skilled and unskilled occupations had changed jobs but their new jobs were similar in terms of occupational status; nine out of ten managers and proprietors had followed different jobs of different occupational status. The pattern of differential job stability was, in fact, related to occupational status:

Very few professionals, managers and proprietors have job instability at the age of 23 and the proportion of clerical workers and skilled manual workers with job instability is only a little greater. The highest proportion of job instability among these higher status occupations is 11 per cent, for clerical workers. The position with respect to semi-skilled and unskilled workers is conspicuously different. For these occupational groups as a whole, 40 per cent were considered to have job instability at the age of 23 or so. (Behrens 1978)¹²

School leavers are at risk, then not only in terms of whether they obtain a job or not but also as to whether they maintain a path of job stability. It could be argued, however, that the value judgments attached to job stability may be inappropriate in an era of more rapid social and technological change. What is of concern is that job re-location seems to be within the same socio-economic rung for many unskilled youth.

Difference between the sexes in schooling and work were examined by Behrens. His hypothesis that boys would remain in the system longer than girls and, that by gaining credentials, would be more

likely to gain access to higher occupational status was not substantiated. More boys stayed at school beyond the compulsory leaving age of 16, yet there were no clearcut differences between the sexes in the overall level of schooling completed. Some 35 per cent of men as against 29 per cent of women undertook some form of post-secondary education. Marked sex differences in further education were apparent:

... two-thirds of men in post-school education enrolled at technical colleges compared with 44 per cent of women. On the other hand women predominated in teachers colleges and in short, specialised courses for such fields as office work or dressmaking. Significantly, more than twice as many men as women undertook university courses. Overall, it can be concluded that more men than women engaged in post-school study, but that they were heavily concentrated in the technical colleges and universities ... (Behrens 1978)¹³

What now seem to be predictable differences in all the studies examining sex group participation in the workforce emerged. A smaller proportion of female leavers entered the workforce. Indeed 41 women on leaving school, immediately entered home duties or family child-minding. At age 23 or 24, 95 per cent of men in the study and 54 per cent of women were in the workforce. Of the women for whom information was available, Behrens states that 43 per cent were housewives. Participation of women in the labour-force in Tasmania is, however, lower than that in any other State. As Encel (1970)¹⁴ observed, there is a process in train whereby women in Australian society are marrying younger, having children earlier, and returning to work at younger age levels. The final stage of this process would not have been evident, therefore, in Behrens' sample.

One result of the Behrens study is surprising, namely that many more women than men entered higher status non-manual jobs on leaving school. This is somewhat misleading since, of the two-thirds seen to be entering professional status occupations, the majority were nurses. Women also predominated in clerical categories (typists and stenographers). More males entered skilled and unskilled jobs, some of which, are more highly paid than nursing or clerical work. Approximately equal numbers of male and female leavers became shop assistants and factory workers. In terms of job chances, more women enter unskilled jobs but more move to skilled jobs. Another interesting trend was that 'more schooling and, particularly, the completion of Year 11 or 12 is associated with an increase in the likelihood of the male subjects gaining entry to high status jobs' (Behrens 1978)¹⁵ Completing upper-secondary was also associated with urban residence and with attendance at socially advantaged schools. Girls from socially advantaged areas were more likely to be in the workforce than were girls from disadvantaged areas.

Behrens argues strongly that school affects present occupational status, an effect that is additional to social class background. Early leavers, furthermore, regardless of social class are located mainly in low status jobs, whereas more leavers who complete their secondary education achieve high status jobs. School participation was linked to social background. The influence of social background was less marked for those students who completed Year 11 and 12, as were the influences of rural residence. That is, once students complete Year 11 and 12 rural residence does not lock them out of higher occupational structures. Country people, as a whole, however, participated less in schooling than did city folk.

Country children furthermore were under-represented in higher status jobs. Those who left school early were more likely to be in low status jobs than their city equivalents. A striking feature was that country girls tended to stay on at school longer than country boys. Among the female leavers, those with more schooling were more likely to be in the workforce than those who left school early.

The second part of the study entailed interviewing a sub-sample of 200 men and women over a range of topics - feelings about school, parental involvement with school, factors influencing the school leaving decision, and secondary courses studied and levels of aspiration.

The significant finding was that early school leavers reported different school experiences from those of other groups. Generally, early leavers felt they should have stayed at school longer; that their parents had not been concerned with their school progress; that their curricula decisions were forced upon them; that school was boring and not likeable. A very early set of school-leavers (Year 8 or before) felt that staying on at school had caused financial problems for their parents and left for this reason.

It was again clear that leavers used their own or family resources for information relating to initial job search. The school emerged again as being unimportant as a source of information or as a perceived source of assistance.

Analysis of career patterns for this sub-sample showed that men were more likely to be upwardly mobile during their early years of employment than were female leavers (26 per cent vs nine per cent). Indeed, by contrast, women were more likely to have been downwardly mobile - especially on re-entering the workforce after child-rearing when they were often forced to accept a lower status job. This is an important sex difference in career tracks of male and female leavers.

A remarkable finding was that 'more of the very early leavers have risen in occupational status than those with more schooling' Behrens (1978)¹⁶. These may be an atypical group, since those who experienced most downward mobility in the

study were found among those leaving at the end of Year 9. In terms of job stability, more fluctuations were experienced by early school-leavers, more stability by those with four years or more of secondary schooling.

The Behrens study is more complex in this analysis than the vignettes presented above indicate. What has been attempted here is to delineate those aspects of schooling which relate to job options and to focus on the ramifications of job choices for males and females and for early leavers and later leavers. One theme emerges more clearly in this study of leavers than in any of the others examined to date. This is that early leaving curtails career decisions because it reduces participation in schooling. Leaving before Years 11 and 12 appears to limit the occupational choices of leavers; to lock them into lower occupational categories; and to increase the likelihood of job instability. For early female leavers, in particular, there is an association with downward social mobility on re-entering the workforce. Furthermore, for all female leavers, upward social mobility is markedly slower and less likely to occur than is the case for male leavers. The occupational destinations for the sexes are predictable, on the basis of studies cited so far. The only surprising finding which is an artifact of the inclusion of nursing into 'professional' occupations, is that higher proportions of female leavers appear to be in the upper occupational levels.

Characteristics of 6th form leavers who immediately enter the workforce: Baldock and Langford (1977)¹⁷

This study was part of an ongoing research investigation entitled 'The Career Development Project'. Its particular value is that it traces final year leavers into the workforce. As is apparent from the studies discussed previously, most of the research on leavers in Australia has been concerned with predicting factors influencing the decision to leave, describing aspects related to leaving and following the work experiences of early leavers, and the post-secondary experiences of terminal leavers. The Baldock and Langford study focused on the terminal leaver and his/her decision to enter the workforce.

The study firstly reports data on some social and psychological characteristics of 6th Form (Year 12) school leavers and uses these to predict the outcome of extended secondary education in Australia. Outcome is defined as 'whether or not the individual was engaged in full time regular employment in the year following school leaving' Baldock and Langford (1977)¹⁸. The second part of the study proposes a causal model of adolescent post-school destinations (further study or full time work) which incorporates the

psycho-social variables examined in the first point of the study.

The data in this study derive from the matriculation sample of a large survey of Regional Colleges of Advanced Education which was undertaken by the Education Research Unit, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University (Anderson, Batt, Beswick, Harman and Selby-Smith, 1973¹⁹; Beswick and Harman, 1975)²⁰. The original sample comprised 5,139 students in Form 6 (Year 12) who were contacted in 1973 before completing the Higher School Certificate (HSC). The sample was followed up in 1974. The data discussed by Baldock and Langford derive from the 1973 and 1974 questionnaire returns.

One of the interesting findings of the Regional Colleges Survey was that 24 per cent of Form 6 (Year 12) leavers were not engaged in further study (as at March of the year following leaving). What were the destinations of the remainder? Some 33 per cent were enrolled in Colleges of Advanced Education, 22 per cent at Universities, five per cent at Technical Colleges; four per cent in the Hospital School of Nursing, three per cent in other forms of post-secondary education, with nine per cent repeating the final year. Baldock and Langford propose that many of the 24 per cent not studying at all would probably return to education after a period of time. Such a large percentage of leavers who have invested time in extended schooling, and yet who fail to pursue post-secondary education, excited the researchers' attention and stimulated them to probe more deeply into aspects relating to this group.

The variables used were those developed for the Regional Colleges Survey and included: sex, family socio-economic status; intrinsic motivation or curiosity, general human interest (aspects relating to the purpose of higher education and the desirable characteristics of colleges and occupations), self-rating of scholastic ability, scientific orientation, desirability of extrinsic rewards, readiness to leave home, readiness for employment, standardised scores in top four Higher School Certificate subjects, realistic expectation in 1973 (work or not), and outcome in 1974 (work or not).

The first analysis compared those who entered the workforce in the year after leaving with students who went on to further study or did other things. The results were summarized thus:

The full time work group is consistently lower on family socio-economic status, on academic ability measures - standardised HSC scores - and in self education with reference to academic matters - self rated scholastic ability and scientific orientation. The working group is conspicuously higher on readiness for employment and are slightly more ready to leave

home, on the average, than the other groups. Baldock and Langford (1977) 21.

These results highlight a recurrent set of themes relating to school leavers in Australia, viz, that early leavers and terminal leavers who do not go on to further education come from lower socio-economic groups, are less academically oriented, are looking more to work than to post-secondary education for future satisfactions. The results of the Baldock and Langford study also indicated that 6th Form (Year 12) leavers entering the work force were less intrinsically and more extrinsically motivated than those who proceed to further education.

Did the study reveal any major sex differences among these terminal leavers? The study found that female leavers had higher levels of intrinsic motivation, markedly higher levels of human interest, and performed better than did males in the HSC examination. Yet, despite their higher attainment on these dimensions, the females in the sample expressed lower expectations in 1973 than did their male counterparts. This latter finding was interpreted as indicating that the expectations of females were more accurate than those of the males and hence female expectations were less likely to be disappointed. If this inference is correct, there is cause for social concern. The female terminal leavers in this sample were competent and intrinsically motivated. Why were they pitching their expectations so low, compared with their male counterparts? What sorts of factors were operating to depress their expectations? Unfortunately none of these issues was explored by Baldock and Langford but they seem particularly worthy of investigation if persons of equal (or superior) talent are to be given equal opportunity to succeed in the workforce. The pattern of sex differences was in no way due to socio-economic status factors - there were no differences between the socio-economic backgrounds of males and females in the sample.

Next, Baldock and Langford extended the work of Beswick (1975) 22 who, using multivariate predictive models, found that the best predictors for determining which leavers would opt for post-secondary education after completing their HSC were: standardised HSC total, readiness for employment, scientific orientation, family socio-economic status and intrinsic motivation. None of Beswick's analyses for predicting the outcome (in work force/not in work force) however, included sex or expectations. This is a somewhat surprising omission since both dimensions have been shown to contribute to models of attainment. Baldock and Langford set about including both sex and expectations in their step-down multiple regression analysis for prediction of entry into the workforce. They found that expectations and performance in the Higher School Certificate (HSC) were the best predictors of the outcome after Form 6 (Year 12). Their other interesting finding was that the addition of expectations and sex as predictor variables reduced the relative contributions of scientific orientation, readiness

for employment and self rated scholastic ability as in Beswick's (1975) model. Since the first part of the study showed that expectations of females were more tailored to reality than those of males, there may be some complex interactions operating among the predictors.

The researchers then proceed to develop a causal model of the transition from 6th Form (Year 12) to work or further study, incorporating their variables. The model begins with 'unexplained' resource variables (socio-economic status and sex) and progresses through four chronological levels to the outcome (to work/not to work). The first level includes competence (measured by intrinsic motivation) and self-concept (measured by human interest scores, self-rated ability and science orientation). Both are perceived as basic in terms of sex role socialisation and class-based attitudes towards the self and towards the drive to acquire knowledge and cognitive competence. Ethical and social values (measured by extrinsic rewards, readiness to leave home and readiness for employment) are considered to develop more slowly and to be moderated by dimensions in the first stage. Educational and occupational expectations (future status expectations) are probably continually changing during adolescence, but are largely determined by the adolescent's self assessment of his/her competences, needs and values. Next come the performance data which are dependent on prior variables.

Quantification of this model is still in progress but Baldock and Langford report some interesting interim results. The variance in the outcome for 1974 explained by the causal variables was only 13 per cent but some clear relationships were revealed. Both sex and socio-economic status appeared to have the same degree of direct effect on intrinsic motivation. Sex had a strong direct effect on human orientation to interest areas (SES did not). In fact, sex seemed to be related more strongly to the endogenous variables than did socio-economic status. This is a very important finding, and, if it is borne out when the more extrinsic quantification is completed, will hopefully lead to a re-appraisal of the significance of sex in predicting leaving outcomes. To date, most studies indicate the power of socio-economic status as a predictor of leaving outcomes. The present study, however, shows the need to explore further the power of the sex variable for determining leaving outcome.

YOUNG WORKERS - PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS

Youth Needs and Public Policies: Wright and Headlam (1976) ²³

Wright and Headlam considered the school experiences of youth, the work prospects of early school leavers, and the leisure pursuits of adolescents. Their report contains a number of very useful recommendations for creating new opportunities for youth and enhancing the quality of their

lives Only those aspects of the study relating to early school leavers are discussed here.

One of the important issues raised in this study is whether early school leaving is 'a good or bad thing'. The authors indicate, on the basis of figures published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the Distribution of Personal Incomes (1968-69) that income later in life is linked directly with the length and level of education:

University degree holders' incomes are highest, followed by non-degree tertiary, technical level, HSC, trades, then by age when the person left school without other qualifications. This is the reality underlying the prevailing, almost unquestioned assumption among our respondents, their parents and of course teachers, that more schooling and higher education is a way to a 'better job'. (Wright and Headlam 1976)²⁴

There seems to be in the society a commitment to extended schooling, as against early leaving for the pragmatic reason of income earning potential over time. Early school leavers do not generally fall into the highest income earning brackets. In the study, some 73 per cent of parents indicated that they would have been really upset if their children had wanted to leave school early. Likewise, some 78 per cent of the 150 respondents in the study were opposed to any lowering of the school leaving age even if promised the chance to return to education later. The majority of parents and students perceive early leaving, therefore, as 'bad in the sense of limiting future options'.

The expectation of Wright and Headlam that they would be able to document how bad it was to leave school early (in terms of diminished life options for adolescents from low socio-economic status homes) was not confirmed when they questioned early school leavers:

One significant piece of our evidence is that among those who leave school before completing their secondary school courses are groups of young people who are apparently the happiest and most satisfied in our whole sample, and those who are the most unhappy and frustrated: the apprentice/nurses on the one hand, the dead-end jobbers without prospects on the other. (Wright and Headlam 1976)²⁵

Early leaving, if congruent with one's future plans, can lead to happiness and satisfaction. But this is clearly not the case for all leavers.

A finding of some concern in the study was that 'the early leavers experienced school at its worst on almost every

measure of the quality of school life'. A number of specific school factors which alienated early leavers were: impersonality, pressures, authoritarian teachers, restrictive rules and regulations, disinterested teachers, no opportunities for expressing a point of view; little or no idea of vocational plans, streaming and being locked out of the success structure. While Wright and Headlam were not surprised that young people left school early under these circumstances they were, however, surprised that financial factors were not a major issue leading to early leaving. However, adolescents from lower socio-economic homes who were disenchanted with school seldom had parents who could support them intellectually and emotionally to complete their schooling, rather than drop out. Once they had left, such leavers were less likely to receive help from parents in the way of informed vocational guidance. The situation for early school leavers from high SES families was somewhat different - more pressure was put on them by parents to remain at school, once they left, family connections and resources were marshalled to provide opportunities for them.

Some 80 per cent of the early leavers who were working indicated that their self-confidence had gone up since leaving school. Some 75 per cent felt that being at work was better than being at work was better than being at school - this was generally a result of unsatisfactory school experience and a feeling that work involved doing something.

Among those leavers who were employed as apprentices, there was a disproportionate number of males and the range of apprenticeship options open to females was narrower than those open to males. (18 males: cadet journalist, retailer, wool classer, trades; nine females: nursing, two radiographers, one hair-dresser). Furthermore, within any occupational category such as nursing for early female leavers, there were no bridging courses for girls who, after training as nurses-aides wanted to qualify as a certificated nurse. To make this transition a girl had to first obtain an academic Higher School Certificate. If this was not obtained, career paths were blocked for early female leavers. Wright and Headlam stress that, although apprenticeships are now available in most fields for males and females, very few girls are in fact taking up apprenticeships. Furthermore, some employers are still reluctant to employ female apprentices. In addition, early female leavers, because they lack a sound information base, often do not think of applying for apprenticeships. The authors comment that the schools are in a strategic position for remedying this situation.

Some eight female leavers had graduated from business colleges and worked as typist-secretaries. Prior to leaving, and in common with most of the early leavers, these girls had reached a 'saturation point' with school:

Their decision to go to business college arose - except in one case - out of school failure, increasing loss of interest and feelings of irrelevancy of schooling, or parental perceptions that the girls were gaining little from school and should get a marketable skill for office work: a better alternative than a factory or shop. For working class families, this provided a desirable avenue for security and upward social mobility for their daughters. (Wright and Headlam 1976) 26

The decision to leave early, therefore, seemed appropriate for these females. They made a vocational decision, participated in a short course, developed a skill, and found employment. They had developed a sense of vocational direction. Such a process of development appears important and may in fact be one of the critical dimensions by which one judges whether early leaving is bad or not for both males and females. For example, Wright and Headlam outline a career development progression which makes it impossible to stigmatise all early leaving as inappropriate:

..... They can perceive a career path developing throughout most of their life - from carpenter to builder to self-employment; from motor mechanic to foreman to management or running his own workshop..... Nurses can make a satisfying career from rising responsibilities and status in hospitals, or service in under-developed countries..... A hairdresser can develop her own clientele, client relationships and hopefully her own salon. (Wright and Headlam 1976) 27

However, business girls were generally not strongly future-oriented so far as work was concerned. Wright and Headlam comment that, as far as a secretary is concerned, the future is not bright:

.....when she has in fact demonstrated her competence and her capacity for responsibility, how much recognition will she get in two or ten years time, compared to her male counterpart who joined the Public Service with Form V (Year 11). Sometimes a secretary will be shouldering large responsibilities, holding a whole section of an operation together but in status and pay this is rarely recognised. Unless she goes to night school and completes formal HSC she has reached her ceiling already. Should she return to work in five or ten years after having a family, this fact will be brought home to her even more forcibly. (Wright and Headlam 1976) 28

Wright and Headlam argue that the structures of TAFE and CAE courses need to be modified to accommodate entry of such business girls into programs which build on their practical competence and develop skills marketable in the commercial world.

Interesting and differentiated profiles of young leavers with 'positive prospects' and those with 'negative prospects' are drawn by Wright and Headlam through descriptive vignettes. For example:

- Christine: enjoying her job, doing it well, growing in competence and confidence, and is receiving recognition and boosts to her self-esteem by promotion to head office-girl and over-award rates of pay.....she rates 'friendly people' and 'the people one works with' as of the highest importance in a job. She sees herself as 'self-confident but not forceful'; 'not really ambitious - just wanting to be happy working'
- Lois: capable but lost interest in school; went to work in a clothing factory as a machinist; (negative prospects) insecurity of textile industry reflected in work experiences; satisfied with making a whole garment; signs of self-dimishment - fear of meeting new people, of making mistakes, of meeting new challenges. (Wright and Headlam 1976) ²⁹

The negative and positive contrast can be easily identified but they cannot easily be explained. Furthermore, within the negative dimensions, there were markedly different male and female responses: young disenchanted male workers were likely to be aggressive and denigratory of the job and the people employed. The females, however, were more passive, ready to put up with their lot, less single-minded, more reliant on work to define their identity and to construct their self-esteem. To females, work was seen more as a fill-in between school and marriage, the latter providing them with fulfillment if work did not.

Although the early male leavers and their responses to schooling and work have not been detailed here, one recurring difference between the sexes must be cited. There was a basic difference in female style and expectations about the nature of work. Female leavers were interested in people, in relationships with people on the job, and in eventually entering higher occupations involving human services for example, nurse, social worker, teacher.

In summary, then, Wright and Headlam advance two important criteria for judging the 'goodness' or 'badness' of the decision to leave school early: whether work satisfaction ensues and whether conditions are conducive for personal development. If these factors are operative then early leavers do have a future, and can develop realistic and satisfying goals. If these factors are lacking, however, personal development can be stunted and opportunities for exercising power and control over the future seem greatly diminished.

Of the major recommendations made by Wright and Headlam concerning ways of improving the quality of life of youth, the following bear most directly on actions likely to enhance the life options of early female leavers:

- . the establishment of 'half-way houses' - centres of transition from education to work, work to work, work to education and education to education, with particular concern for the early school leavers.
- . the provision of an education, employment and recreation advisory counselling service, especially for leavers 'at risk'.
- . the establishment of supplementary service to the unemployed e.g. to build up self-help resources.
- . the provision of an alternative education centre at post-secondary level deliberately oriented towards the transition of youth to adulthood and emphasising learning through action. Such a centre could monitor and regulate the plans of school leavers into the market.
- . recreational and workshop activities designed to build up self-image readiness to accept responsibility, task-oriented human relations; self-confidence and self-reliance; and self-growth or 'booster experiences'.
- . the development of close liaison between schools and community organisations e.g. for work-experience placements in local commercial, industrial and service industries, health and welfare institutions, and social service work placements.
- . the provision of youth consultants for early school-leavers/young workers.
- . the development of new opportunities for women in: apprenticeships; bridging courses from business college certificates to colleges of advanced education; bridging courses from nursing aide certificates to full qualification; employment of para-professional aides in the human services. (Wright and Headlam 1976)³⁰

The study is important, not only for its policy recommendations and for its critical appraisal of value judgments in relation to early leaving, but also for its sympathetic and sensitive discussion of youth and their needs generally.

*Problems of unemployed youth in the Western Region of Melbourne: A study looking at background, aspirations, and access to education of youth in the 15-19 age group. Wassel (1976)*³¹

This report arose from concern over the increasing unemployment of Australian youth, especially recent school leavers. Statistics have been cited which indicate that youth under 21 years of age constitute approximately 40 per cent of the unemployed population, a proportion four times the rate of any other age group. The most disturbing feature is that over ten per cent of all youth have been unemployed. Wassel's fear is that 'if they remain unemployed, they do not gain necessary experience and training and are likely to remain unemployed adults'. Wassel (1976). 33

The particular concerns of the study are: leavers finding employment; the role of technical and further education (TAFE) colleges in meeting or not meeting the needs of leavers; and the differences in school retention patterns. The specific survey objectives were: to enquire into the educational background of employed and unemployed 15-19 year olds in the Footscray/Sunshine regions (Victoria); to identify barriers to vocational aspirations; to investigate the extent to which youth are returning to school because they cannot find employment; and to make recommendations to enhance access to TAFE colleges.

Three samples of 15-19 year old youth were drawn - unemployed youth (N=100), youth returning to school because they could not find employment (N=30) and youth continuing to study at Footscray Technical College (N=50).

The major findings were that more school returners and more unemployed leavers had encountered difficulties at school than did leavers who moved directly into a technical college. The unemployed were older than their grade level school counterparts, suggesting lower achievement and a pattern of repeating levels. Again leavers felt school had not prepared them for a job. To alleviate the transition from school to work, many leavers are clearly in need of job orientation within schools.

Wassel makes significant suggestions, with regard to the need to create job opportunities for this age group. Although he mainly explores this notion within the area of apprenticeships with a technical orientation, the issue needs to be widely explored by industrial, commercial and government bodies. Over one third of the school returners in this study had applied for apprenticeships and had been unable to obtain them. Increasing subsidies to cover the cost of training would lead, Wassel argues, to some increase in access to apprenticeships. Clearly if jobs do not exist for school leavers they have to be created.

To what extent unfavourable school experiences enter into initial job searches needs to be investigated. Wassel, for example, found that many unemployed leavers felt that their teachers had underrated them at school. How do such youth present at job interviews? Wassel talks of the demoralising

school experiences of unemployed youth and speculates as to whether this negative valuing of some youth by the school might be detrimental to youth initiative in other areas. The possibility needs investigation.

Although many unemployed leavers were adverse to returning to school and formal education, many were interested in further training in a vocationally oriented area which interested them. As in other studies, there appeared to have been little pressure placed on unemployed leavers to remain at school. In turn, the aspiration levels of the unemployed leavers were lower than those of either school returners or leavers who went to a technical college. Few unemployed leavers aspired to occupational levels beyond those of their father, that is, were not upwardly mobile in their job orientations. Some unemployed youth displayed what is becoming a more widely experienced picture for all Australian youth - their aspirations were higher than their expectations, indicating, Wassel suggests, that these youth will become discouraged and disillusioned.

Another trend was that many unemployed leavers lacked knowledge of the world of work. Certainly schools had given them little in terms of vocational guidance. In addition, they often lacked the strategies, means and opportunities for gaining access to a job. Migrants, it seemed showed more initiative in these areas than native born Australians.

Overall, there was a lack of knowledge about TAFE colleges, their roles and functions. Wassel suggests that increased publicity would lead to increased demand for college courses. Yet already these colleges cannot meet current needs. Furthermore, what jobs, if any, are unfilled in the technical field which could be filled by leavers gaining further training in technical education. The jobs are not available. The employment market is not improving. Youth therefore need to be given alternatives. Wassel is not optimistic that subsidies offered to employers by government to train youth will increase job opportunities greatly. One ameliorative action that Wassel suggests is work programs, for example, in health and welfare services. One disappointing feature of the survey is that although sex differences are tabled, numbers unemployed, numbers enrolled in technical courses, levels of qualifications, etc., few specific analyses or interpretations are directed towards enhancing our understanding of the problem of unemployed females. True the study indicates that more males were leaving school, that is retentivity was higher for girls in the region studied. The interpretation that there could be more social pressure on males to leave school and become their own income earners or to help support their family seems unfounded and could be equally true for female leavers, at any age. Sex comparisons in job categories and job histories were noticeably absent from the first section of the study. Comparisons between migrants and native Australians were the major focus for school returners, even though the sex of respondents was known. The distinction between unemployed leavers, school returners and leavers in a technical college is a useful dichotomy however. Wassel's study therefore

adds to our knowledge of the destinations of leavers as such, but not to any special understanding of early female leavers. This is a pity since Wassel's study could have added to our knowledge of unemployed female leavers in terms of what, if any, special problems they encounter.

SUMMARY

One of the most striking features to emerge, in current or retrospective interviews, was the dissatisfaction of early leavers with the school experience. School seems not to have catered for their needs - while at school or at the point of entry to a job, say through career guidance.

The early leaver, however, is not without resources, particularly if he/she can obtain a job or an apprenticeship. Gaining a job represented a life with self-esteem and autonomy. Gaining access to an apprenticeship involved a pleasant and fruitful blending of theory and practice and brought a sense of worth and achievement. Such is clearly not the case for early leavers who remain unemployed. Aimlessness, frustration, loss of self-esteem, are themselves concern enough and following as it so often does after an unfavourable school experience, it points to a critical limbo in which increasingly more early leavers are placed. Locked out of schooling and work, such early leavers have few opportunities for personal growth and development, an occurrence which should be of major social concern. Indeed, several of the studies discussed above make serious recommendations as to what needs to be done to improve the quality of schooling and work for youth. Some of these are explored in more detail in Chapter 8, where general implications from this analysis of school leavers are drawn.

The occupational destinations of early leavers, both male and female, are more likely to be in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. Concomitant factors are higher job instability and limited opportunities for social mobility. Very early leavers, however, appear to be atypical and in one study, were shown to have gained access to upper occupational categories. No reasons for this could be adduced from the study. Early leaving and occupational destinations were again linked to social class and to sex related factors, as were post-school destinations.

The school was also seen as inadequate in terms of the information and counselling services it provided on careers and jobs. This is particularly worrying, in a time of high unemployment, when some leavers return to school. What will school give them then that it did not in their earlier experience? It seems that the transition from school to post-secondary education is not as traumatic because the discontinuity is not as great.

Finally this chapter, in conjunction with the previous six chapters, has shown that female leavers, regardless of social class, rural or urban residence, migrant or Australian origin, are disadvantaged in terms of occupational choice and job access, a factor apparently unrelated to their school achievement. Since occupational status is a major definer of social worth in

Australian society, it is important to locate the educational and early work experiences of female leavers, into the broader context of the opportunity structures in Australian society. Why is it that female leavers are not entering diverse occupations which bring high economic rewards? To stop only at educational explanations such as participation in schooling achievement levels and the like is to fail to recognise that educational processes are closely tied to social, economic and political processes. Indeed it is within those domains that the antecedents of unequal chances for female leavers begin.

PART III

CONCLUSION : LEAVERS IN PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The approach taken in this review has been an analytical one. Various demographic aspects of school leaving have been examined and the pattern of female retentivity examined, to determine whether early leaving is likely to be more evident among females than males. The figures provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and by the State Departments of Education, suggest that there are no major discrepancies between the sexes in leaving patterns. Indeed, in some states there has been a tendency for more girls to remain at school.

Retentivity considered in isolation from other social facts can be misleading, however. Some of the research studies on school leavers which were examined in this review suggested that female increased retentivity was associated with diminishing job opportunities for females and with difficulties associated with gaining apprenticeships. Consequently, the increased school retentivity patterns for females cannot be assumed to indicate equality of educational opportunity.

Nor has there been agreement as to whether retentivity is equal for the sexes. Indeed, among the small-scale regional studies on leaving patterns there is not the consistency of trends that emerges from official government and State Education Department statistics. Probably the most accurate statement that can be made concerning retentivity for females in Australian educational institutions, based on a composite of studies, is that female retentivity is increasing and is only marginally different from that of males (in some cases falling short of, in other cases exceeding that of males).

School leaving figures mask the impact of the mechanisms of the processes of classroom learning on the decision to leave (e.g. teacher attitudes, curricula choices, school rules and procedures, learning materials and resources). These processes, all antedate the leaving decision. To some extent they may hasten the decision to leave early, as the case histories of early leavers clearly show. In other instances, while not influencing the decision to leave, these processes might construct a legacy of the self-doubt, ambivalence, minimal self-confidence, low self-esteem, and low aspirations for female leavers. Surprisingly little work has been done

Australia to link any of these dimensions with school termination decisions. Yet the abundance of research on adolescent girls at school suggests that powerful and specific sex-related factors operate in schools which serve to depress the aspirations and achievements of potential female leavers.

Processes of differential social valuing of males and females are not confined to the school milieu. They extend to the workplace and to post-secondary education, and indeed to the whole of society. Here they become manifest in the traditional female choices of fields of study and traditional female job patterns. Later, this sexual differentiation of curricula patterns and job categories becomes the basis for economic inequality and loss of status and power by females. Females cluster into 'service' type jobs or unskilled jobs which are less highly paid and less likely to be allied to the decision-making hierarchies. Studies of professional women indicate that even in this credentialled area, status, power and financial rewards are not accorded to Australian women.

There are paradoxes evident. Social activity (anti-discrimination laws, anti-sexism strategies) suggests that this ingrained sex-differentiated pattern of educational and vocational future is changing. Yet the most recent research indicates that the basically conservative and traditional values of Australian society remain unchanged. This is to say, male and female roles continue to be sex differentiated rather than reciprocally shared. The hiatus between overt structures (which are ostensibly opening their doors to females) and the covert value systems (which are male-dominated and place women in child-rearing roles first) remain unabridged. Social change proceeds at one level, yet the values lag is such that little evidence of enhanced opportunities for female leavers is discernible. Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that little or no change has taken place in the past two decade.

Within the above ambiguous context that has evolved from an examination of broad educational, community and work structures, what can be said of early leavers generally and of female leavers in particular? What, in aggregate, do the official statistics, nation-wide surveys, and smaller regional and area studies tell us about school leavers? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, what action needs to be taken as a consequence of this analysis, if equality of educational opportunity is to be realised for female school leavers in Australia?

THE EMERGING PICTURE

General features of potential early school leavers.

- . generally, leavers expect school to provide them with knowledge and skills that they can take into their post-school lives.
- . most adolescents have unrealistically high aspirations, not in terms of their own abilities, but in terms of the economic structures being able to incorporate them (for example the high proportion that aspires to professional occupations).
- . all school leavers are at risk during a period of high structural unemployment.
- . parents continue to be the most crucial reference group for leavers making educational and vocational decisions.
- . higher socio-economic status is associated with increased participation in schooling, regardless of sex.
- . longer schooling is associated with gaining a higher status job (except for very early leavers) and maintaining greater job stability.
- . most potential leavers find career guidance inadequate and suggest that more comprehensive systems be developed to include work-experience programs and closer relationships between school and work.
- . most potential leavers seem less aware of what post-secondary educational options are available in the technical and further education institutions than they are concerning courses in universities and colleges of advanced education.

Early leavers' perceptions of school:

- . early leavers are generally disenchanted with school, either disliking it or being bored and fed up with it. At best, early leavers display a general disinterest in schooling.
- . most early leavers see school as irrelevant to their future occupational plans.
- . School curricula are highly criticized by early leavers in terms of restricted choices, insufficient electives, and not catering to their future needs.
- . early school leavers had experienced school failure more than any other group. They are failing subjects and achieving poor grades. Often they see themselves

- is unwilling or unable to cope with the academic demands of school;
- the regimentation of school irks early leavers more than any other group, that is the pressures, the authoritarian teachers, the restrictive rules and practices, and the impersonality of relationships;
- early leavers are most dissatisfied with the provision of vocational guidance services, since these services often fail to reach them before they leave or else provide them with inadequate counselling and careers information.

Early female leavers; home and school

- early female leavers perceive that parents are still slightly less happy to support their daughter's education to the extent that they do their sons;
- girls whose fathers are unemployed are likely to be forced to leave school early, (this is not true for boys whose fathers are unemployed);
- there is evidence to suggest that early female leaving is frequently related to use of females as family support structures (for example in times of sickness, death or unemployment);
- early female leavers feel their parents are not generally concerned with their school progress;
- there is some suggestion that early female leavers are being used as a source of cheap domestic labour at home and in family businesses;
- more female early leavers than males regret not having stayed on at school longer, once they perceive how their future options had been curtailed;
- there is evidence to suggest that some adolescents receive more schooling than they want, especially if they come from high status homes. More females generally of lower status and of whom early leavers are prominent, feel that they are forced to settle for less education than they want;
- female early leavers sometimes have to cope with early pregnancies. Overall, the responsibility for child-rearing and child-minding seems to be borne entirely by

early female leavers whose husbands are unemployed or in unskilled jobs;

- . early female leavers are more at risk in terms of the possibility of aberrant behaviour (for example crime, moral risk, truancy, and from a recent survey, suicide);
- . the quality of provision of vocational guidance, although poor for all leavers, is especially poor for early females leavers putting them more at risk on the job market. Traditional fields that have absorbed early female leavers are drying up and alternative jobs are not being discussed with early female leavers;
- . few work experience programs have been devised for early female leavers.

Issues relating to whether the decision to leave school early is a 'good' or 'bad' decision were discussed in a previous section of this review. Any evaluation of the decision, Wright and Headlam (1976)¹ argued needs to be made in the context of whether early leaving is congruent with future plans and whether it contributes to personal development, happiness and satisfaction. Consequently, it cannot be maintained that all early leavers are disadvantaged and at risk. Indeed several benefits accrue to early leavers who articulate themselves the positive correlates of early leaving as:

- . enhanced self-esteem on leaving school;
- . increased self-confidence and autonomy;
- . increased financial independence;
- . development of new friendship networks;
- . a new happiness and satisfaction in task or job orientation;
- . a keenness to work and prove themselves;
- . a meshing of theory and practice in certain apprenticeships (and training such as nursing) make them happy and satisfied;
- . a confirmation, through the above factors, that their decision to leave early was the right one (although a few felt regret since it then limited their job options).

Yet within this grid of factors indicating several positive dimensions of early leaving for females, there are signs of confined horizons.

Early female leavers in jobs:

- . experience low pay and display poor income earning potential;
- . are segregated into female-type jobs (mainly unskilled) which are fast disappearing with technological change;
- . are more likely to be permanently locked into lower occupational categories and experience no opportunities for advancement;
- . are more likely to perceive jobs as 'stop-gaps' prior to marriage so that they accept their powerlessness since it is seen as temporary;
- . experience downward social mobility on re-entering the workforce after child-rearing (partly because of lack of skills but also because the structure of work does not build in sufficient part-time and retraining options for them);
- . may experience 'ageism' as well as 'sexism' in employment with employers valuing older persons and avoiding, where possible, employing female youth;
- . by being person-oriented on jobs, and 'service' oriented, may even avoid opportunities for advancement when they occur;
- . few female early leavers take up any post-secondary study options, before or after marriage (with the exception of those who enter apprenticeships).

The negative aspects of early leaving for females, although not well researched, indicate the following:

- . self-diminishment, the non-valuing of self with an onset of apathy and an avoidance of new challenges;
- . passive acceptance of one's lot and a filling-in-time orientation to work until married;
- . unemployment and a sense of failure and personal risk;
- . personal upheaval in a shift from rural to urban contexts to search for employment;
- . no competence in political decision-making as evidenced through lack of understanding of reasons for joining unions or a perception of their own vulnerability in the economic structure.

Sex-divided pathways

Within the society clear sex-divisions are evident in the paths open to male and female leavers.

For females the pathways are limited:

- . female employment falls into narrowly defined sex-stereotyped categorizations;
- . the nature of most female occupations offer little scope for advancement, whether in professional, public service, clerical, or unskilled fields;
- . female job opportunities are very closely associated with areas likely to diminish quickly due to technological change (e.g. clerical, secretarial, shop assistants);
- . the access of females to apprenticeships is on a very limited scale, except in sex-stereotyped areas, for example hairdressing;
- . more females than males are unemployed and fewer female leavers than male leavers enter the workforce;
- . female occupational aspirations are lower than those of males, their choices narrower and more limited;
- . high aspiring females are unlikely to have their aspirations met in male dominated economic and career hierarchies;
- . females are under-represented in skilled jobs, in farming, fishing and the prestige professional occupations;
- . females, compared with males, are less likely to be upwardly mobile during their early years of employment.

For females who proceed to post-secondary education, the pathways are still clearly sex differentiated:

- . females tend to enter teachers training institutions, business colleges or nurse education institutions, i.e. they choose narrow and limited tracks;
- . more males choose courses other than teacher education in universities and colleges of advanced education;
- . females are under-represented in technical areas - in apprenticeships and in technical and further education courses
- . females exhibit different work values, e.g. females are more 'person-oriented' in their work roles and place more value on human relationships (compared with males who are said to be more goal-oriented, more

ambitious, more future-oriented, more single-minded, more interested in extrinsic rewards).

Overall, girls are more affected by poverty, socio-economic status and rural origin than are boys, in terms of job options. Girls, in work roles and other post-secondary roles, seem to have their options limited by sex-related inequality operating in the Australian political, economic and social contexts.

EFFECTING CHANGE

The situation confronting early female leavers in Australia, and female leavers in general, needs to be viewed with a context of factors operating nation-wide in Australia and world-wide throughout most industrialised democracies (that is the post-industrial society). In post-industrial societies, technological change is so advanced that the need for labour has dramatically diminished and may never rise again, that is a vacuum of human roles unrelated to work have to be considered. This makes change all the more difficult since ameliorative action to one part of the system, for example, equality of access, does not necessarily influence the operation of the totality. For example, more female school leavers than males are unemployed: legislation could be introduced to equalise participation in employment, in the government sector, so that unemployment (like retentivity) could be more equally distributed between the sexes. Such a 'solution', while effecting equality of opportunity at one level, merely re-distributes unemployment between male and female leavers. The same processes could operate with post-secondary educational institutions as quota systems become more evident in the current period of contraction in post-secondary education in Australia. This is unfortunate since non-vocationally oriented education could become an important part of the readjustment of post-industrial societies.

There are system factors which interlock making the processes of effecting change complex and difficult. For example, major structural changes in the work force have occurred as the result of technological change, demographic change, and the changing nature of work patterns. One of the consequences of these changes has been structural unemployment, especially for the young. While female and male school leavers have been greatly affected by structural unemployment, the consequences for females have been more severe (that is higher unemployment).

Throughout these shifts in the nature and balance of the workforce, the role of the school has been critically assessed. The function of school as 'preparation for life' has come to be interpreted as 'preparation for a vocation', with more emphasis being placed on the transition from school to work, more emphasis being given to the school's role in vocational

guidance. The sorting and selecting processes operating within the school have developed a new significance in a period of high unemployment. Whereas previously, the competitive structure within schools was aimed more at a hierarchy of jobs and post-secondary options, the pressure is now towards access to a limited number of jobs and places in post-secondary education. In such a context, vocational guidance, something most school leavers claim to want and need, becomes a process of the re-distribution of unemployment as leavers are taught strategies for obtaining jobs at the expense of other youth. Schools seem trapped into a process of gearing youth for vocational preparation or other post-secondary roles when the society has ceased to provide sufficient roles for youth to fulfil, either in the work-force or in post-secondary education. Furthermore, non-work has been negatively labelled by the society ('the dole bludger' dyndrome). Youth, without access to meaningful roles can hardly be blamed for dissociating themselves from the society or for developing feelings of alienation. There is little evidence that the society is actively engaged in a process of job creation for school leavers or indeed for the mass of unemployed in the society. To engage youth in socially productive activity which would enhance their self-esteem and confidence and involve them in a genuine learning environment seems to be a solution that the government avoids, perhaps because of its financial implications and because of the possibility of confrontation with unions over the nature of paid work. In the field of post-secondary training Dr. W.G. Walker (Professor of Education, University of New England) recently advocated the payment of unemployment benefits to youth until they reached the age of 21 years. Walker's argument was that if youth were to be unemployed, it was better that they should be receiving some training during this period which would equip them to fill jobs as these became available. Such an approach provides one of several alternatives governments could utilise until the macro-systemic factors are 'solved' by industrialised democracies. To date there has been no government reaction.

Within this general setting and context, any recommendations for effecting change must be perceived as part of a process of gradual social, economic and political change. Although lacking Pantagloss's optimism concerning what is attainable in this best of all possible worlds, it is the conviction of the present reviewer that some action can and should be taken to alleviate a number of factors confronting school leavers, particularly females. These recommendations are presented below as ideas to be 'worked up' by appropriate bodies and agencies.

The role of the society

The society should:

- . consider whether economic factors should predominate over human and social factors, that is, can the society in all conscience educate a generation of unemployed (and perhaps later, unemployable) youth? The cost to individuals of loss of self-esteem, economic vulnerability, and self-doubt will come to be reflected in the society through alienation, disillusion, political malaise, and economic confusion. For example, prolonged unemployment and subsistence on dole benefits are seen to produce low morale leading to behaviour patterns and attitudes not conducive to stable employment in the future.
- . consider how, through re-current education, it might provide some meaningful interlinking of school and work. If adult re-entry to all levels of education were paid, some access to employment by youth would be possible and would fulfil at least two important functions; it would: provide youth with the opportunity to at least experience work (otherwise a generation who have never been in paid employment will exist); allow adults to be re-trained so that educational provisions are more evenly distributed over age ranges rather than being skewed towards youth;
- . create a role for youth who are being locked out of work because of the lack of jobs. It would not be difficult, for example, to create useful and socially productive activities which would benefit youth (through raising their self-esteem by placing them in a genuine learning environment or a socially contributing role) and benefit the society. For example, unemployment payments could easily be redefined into part-time work payments for community service. The range of services from which youth and the community could benefit are innumerable and include environmental improvement (e.g. beautification of rivers, parks, school playgrounds), community support structures (e.g. meals on wheels, hospital visitations, crisis support), para-professional roles (e.g. teacher aides, one-to-one English tutorials for newcomers to Australia, nurses-aides) and craft maintenance roles (e.g. learning home maintenance skills, simple plumbing, simple accounting, working with textures and fabrics). Provided the work is dignified, satisfying to the individual, and useful to the society, every effort should be made to overcome bureaucratic negations of the non-feasibility of such schemes;
- . ensure that a new 'poor' class of school leaving youth is not being created through the maintenance of high

unemployment figures for youth;

- . if it is serious about de-centralisation and equality of opportunity for both rural and urban Australians, take additional measures to solve youth unemployment in rural areas;
- . create new work structures and patterns. For example, permanent part-time work, job sharing, combined family incomes and work alternation are a few of the several options available to the less attractive alternative of a fixed dichotomy between employed and unemployed persons, and paid and unpaid work;
- . create alternative career pathways, especially for women. For example, there is increasing evidence that the hitherto accepted pathways from school to one's chosen career are not ones that will necessarily predominate in the future. Frequent career changes may be both necessary and desirable; periods of work and non-work may become inevitable for both sexes; married women will be freer to return to active employment after only brief childrearing periods. The full utilization of these social phenomena will require new ways of thinking such as increasing the use of universities, colleges of advanced education and technical colleges (TAFE) as institutions of adult learning, and the recognition by secondary schools of their role to prepare the students for lifelong education, training and re-training. TAFE, for example, is still under-utilized by females, especially mature age women. Barriers seen to their full participation are isolation from sources of information, lack of confidence, family and social pressure, employer resistance and logistical problems of transport and child-minding. None of these barriers is unsurmountable if given some social and governmental support.
- . re-appraise its work values. Evidence exists that widespread changes have occurred since the 1950s in work values among the young in the direction of a general weakening of the work ethic and an increasing demand for self-actualization through work (Musgrave 1977)². It has been argued that a lessening of the work ethic could relieve an individual from the need to develop his/her identity through his/her paid occupation. Such a process of re-construction could buffer a person from the effects of unemployment. Hamilton Smith (1977)³ has argued, however, that there is little evidence of change in values among the chronically unemployed young. He suggests rather that this phenomenon will leave its victims psychologically depressed and unfit to attempt work in the future. That is, the society is responsible

in large part for the maintenance or dissolution of the 'work ethic' - society cannot blame its youth if it provides insufficient work roles to underpin the reward structure of the work ethic society;

- construct a series of work alternatives which are appropriate to a post-industrial society. Such a process will involve 'unlearning' negative labelling attached to persons not engaged in productive work, as well as the creation of creative and innovative alternatives to 'tangible' productive work. For example, education, for its own sake rather than its vocational utility, could become important again, and music, art, craft and leisure pursuits could be more highly valued.

The role of the schools

The schools should provide:

- an analysis of the workforce and some explanation of the features of structured unemployment so that youth confront the reality of non-work with a socio-economic and political perspective;
- an understanding of the nature of work (conditions, type of work involved in different jobs, how to cope in a job, the role and functions of unions);
- strategies for the initial job search, for example, information sources, how to apply for a job, make out applications, conduct themselves in interviews. ('Talking Shop' a film produced by Film Australia is an example of the material available);
- a planned sequence of work-school links, for example visiting speakers, work experience programs, link courses;
- assistance in the career decision-making process (by assisting leavers to decide what they are best suited to, and by equipping them with decision-making skills so that they can make appropriate and realistic choices);
- early career guidance so that potential early leavers are reached, career choice is a developmental process;
- teachers with the time and resources to become more informed about careers (if this is a role the community expects of teachers);
- programs to prepare leavers for non-work, since 40 per cent of initial school leavers who opt to enter work

are currently unemployed;

- . greater curricula choices, more subjects relevant to students' needs and interests; more electives which link school and work (especially for girls whose options are severely curtailed by present curricula patterns);
- . 'booster' experiences for enlarging the horizons and self-esteem of girls;
- . consciousness-raising programs (for all students and staff so that sexism is exposed and its diminishing influences redressed);
- . problem-solving and decision-making strategies, in school and work related areas, so that leavers are equipped to make decisions about their post-school roles;
- . semester or tri-semester credentialling (so that leavers can enter the job market in two or three waves, rather than in single-peak period, and so that leavers receive some credential for work already completed during the year in which they 'prematurely' terminate).

The role of employers

Employers should:

- . co-operate with schools in devising programs which link school and work;
- . develop liaisons with schools and the community to foster work-experience, job-placement programs and the development of more vocationally-oriented school programs;
- . consider re-structuring existing jobs;
- . engage in job creation, especially apprenticeships for females;
- . establish a more comprehensive system of part-time work, particularly for females engaged in child-rearing;
- . build on government initiatives in pay-sharing arrangements for work and training;
- . permit work-study programs so that training can be updated and/or qualifications upgraded.

Finally, because in this inter-locking totality of socio-political, economic, technological and demographic features, the female leaver has been shown to be particularly disadvantaged because of the nature of sex-role stereotyping operating with the Australian context, a number of specific recommendations are given for effecting change in that area.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

The consistently recurring pattern of sex differences to emerge in the studies examined in this review suggest that the school has an important role to play in modifying sex-role stereotyping and in bringing about social and educational equality of opportunity. Some suggestions for effecting change are briefly explored below.

Identity construction

In the past, girls have tended to construct their identity in terms of their prescribed role as homemakers, for whom educational and vocational achievement has been seen as relatively unimportant for identity construction. More recently, when girls have been encouraged to combine both home-making and a career, a territorial orientation has developed with girls aspiring to and being encouraged to aspire to the social and helping professions or to the artistic and craft areas. Very few girls have been encouraged to pursue careers in mathematics, science, and engineering. At one level, it is possible to preach the 'be anything you want' creed, but how dysfunctional is this unless changes occur elsewhere?

What changes need to occur to break the cycle? Firstly, parents, teachers and peers need to be supportive during a phase of identity re-construction. It is noteworthy that studies of women who received doctorates in mathematics and who showed creativity in this area: identified with professional fathers, received encouragement from appropriate female role-models, and received parental support (Fox 1976)⁴. Indeed, what Fox reports in terms of mathematics and girls probably has equal validity in several other curricula areas within the school, that is:

Whether or not gifted girls receive much special encouragement at home to aspire towards professional careers, they are not likely to get much special career counselling in schools or special encouragement in mathematics classes. Teachers believe that boys are better at mathematics than girls and thus probably fail to notice and encourage those girls who have real aptitude for mathematics (Fox 1976)⁵.

The school, then, has at least three responsibilities in the area of identity construction:

- . to ensure freedom of choice in curricula areas and not channel girls into certain offerings and away from others;
- . to improve career advice and counselling services so that girls are alert to wider career options than those to which they have traditionally been accustomed;
- . to provide, through staffing policies, female career models in areas traditionally male (for example mathematics and science).

Planned Intervention

Although specifically related to breaking down the stereotypes attached to girls and mathematics, Fox's paper offers a number of important strategies for encouraging girls to develop their talents more fully. As Fox astutely cautions, removing sex discrimination barriers in hiring does not automatically cause women to surge forth and fill the ranks of scientists. Fox argues that programs aimed at increasing women's participation in careers should probably begin early, even as early as the elementary school years. His tactics include:

- . use of advance placement courses with women mathematicians and all-girl classes or classes where girls are not in a minority;
- . exposure to appropriate female role models;
- . telling girl students that they are good at maths and science;
- . informing them about interesting career possibilities;
- . encouragement by parents and teachers to view mathematics and science careers as realistic goals for women (and one could add any other domain which has traditionally been perceived as the prerogative of male students).

Challenging assumptions

Schools could play a major role in encouraging parents, employers and students to question many of the deep-rooted but no longer valid traditions and assumptions about educating boys and girls. For example, the school is in the most powerful position to introduce a deliberate policy of minimizing sex differences in the planning of curricula to ensure that the principal areas of the curriculum are open to

all boys and girls. The possible vocational advantages of this approach are self-evident. In addition, schools could encourage parents to consider whether or not they give the same quality of support to boys and girls in their later stages of education where critical decisions affecting future educational progress and choice of careers have to be made. If parents are failing to be equitable in this task, the personal and social consequences of such differential support in education should be made clear to them. It has been argued that, as the quality of careers education and guidance improves in schools, and as parental involvement in the guidance process increases, pupils of both sexes will benefit. Hopefully, such a situation will develop, but not without the school system participating fully. It is important to realize that teachers, like parents, are equipped with attitudes towards, and expectations of boys and girls. Teachers need to challenge many, if not most, of the time-honoured assumptions about inherent characteristics of boys and girls and their probable career prospects.

One of the reports published by the Department of Education and Science (United Kingdom) on views of Inspectors about the 16-19 age group (1974) makes the interesting suggestion that girls themselves may be a possible source of attitude change:

... girls themselves may be bringing about a gradual change in the climate of opinion. In a number of schools girls are taking the initiative in planning for their future with or without encouragement from their parents. These examples are mainly found among the more able girls to whom success in public examinations has given the means of overcoming the constraints of customs and traditions. (*Curricular Differences for Boys & Girls*, Department of Education and Science 1974) 6

With more and more girls responding to change, and as more mothers increase their support for the education of their female children (as an aspect of their own 'liberation'), it seems more assumptions will be challenged and aspects of sex-role discrimination will be forced to disappear. The role of the school in quickening this process is vital.

Diminishing sexism

Teachers need to examine their own behaviour to perceive whether or not their attitudes and behaviour are sexist. The teacher who is not confident in this approach could begin by examining textbooks and the media for sexism as part of regular classes.

As the nature of sexism becomes more clearly understood by teachers and students, more concentrated attempts to avoid

such behaviour (both overt and covert) can be expected to be undertaken collaboratively. The attitudes of peer groups are especially significant here, and elementary socio-metric techniques could well be used to explore: cross-sex friendship patterns; values/attitudes of same sex cliques so that systematic attempts could be made to change the attitudes and behaviour of target students (for example leaders of cliques). The sensitive use of role-play, in which roles are reversed, could also be used to advantage to alert students to various aspects of sexism.

System feedback

One way of quickening change is to alert society to changes that have already occurred and to be critical of forces which impede change. In a colourful discussion paper, 'Your Argument is Irrefutable, But I Don't Believe It' or Resistance to Social Change in Schools, presented at the S.A.A.N.Z. Conference, 1976⁷, Shirley Sampson argues against the 'system level intransigence, boundary maintenance in the school' and 'the cosy take-for-granted world of the teacher' - all of which inhibit changes now in progress in the education of girls. Such resistance needs to be exposed so that strategies can be evolved for hastening change in these resistant areas. Often, however, it is positive feedback which becomes the greater catalyst for change. For example, *Girls, School and Society* (1975)⁸ presents evidence of greater participation in prolonged schooling by girls and enhanced career opportunities. By feeding back into the school evidence of changing educational and career patterns of girls, change may well be accelerated. In addition, social evidence (from legislation, news, popular magazines, television, professional journals) that the traditional role and lifestyle of women is changing and must be fed into the system to foster change.

Strategies for change are complex and problematic. This should not provide a slender basis for inaction, however. Rather parents, educators, and students themselves must now assume responsibility for providing a climate in schools, which is free from sex-role stereotyping, so that societal values and attitudes may be re-constructed.

POSTSCRIPT

Major School Leaver Studies in Progress

There are a number of major research projects in progress which will enable an extension of this assessment of sex-related aspects of early leaving to be undertaken in the near future. For those readers interested in further examination of the pathways of male and female leavers in Australia, the following studies should yield detailed reports in the next one to three years.

The Study of School Leavers

A project being undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and jointly funded by ACER and the Educational Research & Development Committee (ERDC). It began in 1978 and is due to be completed in mid-1981. It currently includes seven emphases:

- . a review of Australian research on the transition from school to work;
- . a basic information survey of all 17-year-olds;
- . a career information study based on the 17-year-old sample, most of whom will have left high school;
- . a study of the development of vocational decisions among students in the early years of high school;
- . a study of the perceptions of ex-students on the quality of school life;
- . a case study of the way in which decision-making in schools might be influenced by information on the perception of ex-students; and
- . an indepth interview study of the problems of unemployed youth.

A Survey of Rural School Leavers

A project being undertaken at Roseworthy Agricultural College and funded by ERDC. It began in 1976, and is due to be completed in 1979. Particular attention is being devoted to:

- . the motives of school leavers and influences bearing on young persons who leave school in rural areas;
- . the decisions made by secondary students to enrol in tertiary education, and the transition from secondary to tertiary education;
- . the progress of members of the community through various forms of tertiary training;
- . the relationship between available educational facilities and the economic and social development of the area.

School Experiences and Subsequent Entry of Leavers into the Workforce

A project being undertaken by the Datex Co-operative, Newcastle and funded by ERDC. The study will begin in 1979.

The aims of the study are to:

- . Establish the relationship between school experience and school performance, and subsequent experience in the labour market and at work. In particular, the study will set out to assess the relationship between various outcomes of the school education process and labour force entry experience. The principal factors to be considered include:
 - . the school year in which students left school;
 - . level of skill achieved in basic reading and mathematics;
 - . elective subjects studied at school;
 - . weight apparently given by employers to examination results, school gradings, school reports and teachers' recommendations;
 - . influence on employers' decisions, pupils' perception of their preparedness for post-school life, participation in wider school activities such as sporting representation, various school service activities, club activities organised within the school, and job experience programs.

It is anticipated that points at which school experiences have inadequately prepared students to cope with the transition from school to work will also be identified.

- . Document the process followed by a sample of school leavers towards integration into the labour force, over a period ranging from twelve to twenty-two months;
- . Document the attitudes of employers towards the school leaver group, and
- . Make recommendations directed towards increasing the efficiency and relevance with which schools and vocational guidance institutions assist students in making the transition from school to work.

Recent Findings from Longitudinal Surveys of School Leavers, Students and Young Workers in Australia

This project is being undertaken by the Career Development Group, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Melbourne, for the Committee of Inquiry into Education & Training. The Report, as yet available only to this Committee of Inquiry, will be circulated in 1979. Among the many concerns of the study are:

- . patterns of movement from secondary education to higher education and employment;

- student characteristics, background and motives (including a section on sex differences and career prospects for women);
- some selected problems within the educational process and vocational prospects (for example unemployment in the post-matriculation group; tendency to 'stay in the groove' of work or study; geographic mobility and rural-urban differences practicability of work-study combination.

End-of-school Transition Project

The Victorian Institute of Secondary Education (VISE) is at present carrying out a research project aimed at obtaining a deeper understanding of the problems associated with the end-of-school transition of young persons, particularly those who leave before the end of Year 12, and at developing with the help of school and community personnel, proposals for action to alleviate these problems.

The Schools Commission Special Projects Program is providing substantial funding for the project and the Victorian Education Department is supporting it through the provision of staff.

The project is being carried out in two areas - the Gippsland and Northern Metropolitan Regions of the Victorian Education Department. It is anticipated that the detailed examination of both a rural and an urban community will add depth to the study and assist in the development of a deeper understanding of existing problems and ensure that appropriate action is initiated. It is believed that close involvement of school communities in the research phase will enable both the collection of meaningful data and facilitate the adoption of recommendations. Furthermore, reports of recent research in both regions exist and provide a basis for further investigation. In Gippsland, projects completed include a study of the career intentions of students, an analysis of the actual destinations of school leavers and a follow-up study of leavers in the eastern part of the region. In the Northern Metropolitan Region a recent study examined student access to and withdrawal from technical and further education courses.

In the initial phase of this project, a few school communities will be selected for detailed examination. Interviews will be carried out with a range of persons within each school community who are involved in the transition of young people from school; and will include school staff, students, ex-students either in or out of employment, parents, employers and personnel from government and independent agencies such as the Commonwealth Employment Service and trade unions.

The findings from these case studies will then be taken back into the schools in the regions to further develop proposals for concrete and realisable action programs to be adopted by the schools and their communities.

The project reflects the general interest of the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education in the transition of students from school to work or further education and its particular concern for the problems of early school leavers.

APPENDIX A

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE WIDER STUDY

PART I : SCHOOL LEAVERS IN AUSTRALIA : AN OVERVIEW

SCHOOL LEAVERS: YOUTH AT RISK

Number of leavers

Leavers most at risk

GENERAL LEAVER TRENDS

Defining participation, retention, leaving

General leaver statistics

Time of leaving

Age and sex distribution of leavers

Historical trends in leaving patterns

State trends in leaver statistics

Victoria

New South Wales

Tasmania

Western Australia

South Australia and Northern Territory

Queensland

Summary

Differences among leavers

System and locale

Socio-economic status

Sex composition of schools

Migrant origin

Aboriginal origin

Summary

DESTINATION OF LEAVERS

Numbers of leavers

General pattern

Employment

Unemployment

Leavers proceeding to further study

Summary

PART II : SCHOOL LEAVERS : NATIONAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES

THE MAJOR NATIONAL STUDIES OF SCHOOL LEAVERS IN AUSTRALIA

Studies on Leavers by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER):

School Leavers in Australia 1959-60
Radford (1962)

School Leavers in Australia 1971-72
Radford & Wilkes (1974)

Commission of Inquiry into Poverty Studies on School Leavers :

Factors Affecting School Leaving and Work Decisions for Girls Knight (1977)

Prospects for School Leavers McGaw et al (1977)
Summary

OTHER MAJOR STUDIES ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Early School Leavers in Australia Rosier (1978)

Identifying Early School Leaving Poole (1978)

Early School Leavers Poole and Jones (1976)

Case studies of early female leavers

Studies with a minor focus on leaving

Summary

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LEAVING: REGIONAL STUDIES

The Rural Studies :

Central Gippsland Regional Study: Students' Intentions Survey (1977)

The Huon Valley Study Behrens et al (1978)

The Bendigo Survey Volek (1977)

The Urban Studies :

School Leavers of the Inner Urban, Melbourne Central Region 1977 Kiraly and Malley (1978)

The Luck of the Game: A Study of Inner Suburban School Leavers Tinney et al (1974)

Summary

SCHOOL LEAVERS ENTERING THE WORKFORCE OR NON-WORK

Schooling and Work Behrens (1978)

Characteristics of 6th Form Leavers who Immediately Enter the Work Force Baldock & Langford (1977)

Young Workers - Prospects and Problems Wright and Headlam (1976)

Problems of Unemployed Youth Wassel (1976)

Summary

PART III: THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOL LEAVING DECISIONS FOR FEMALES

UNEQUAL LIFE CHANCES FOR FEMALE LEAVERS?

The female in Australian society

Sustaining the stereotypes

Sex-role socialisation

Prevalence of sex stereotypes

Self-concept and fear of success

The concept of vocational self

Competence of identity

Intra-personal dimensions: girls and their resources

Ability/performance

Self-esteem and self-concept

Aspirations and expectations

Biological

Early marriage

Early maternity

School organization and practice

Administration and power structure

School procedures

Facilities

School plant and equipment

Influence of teachers

Curricula patterns

Materials and resources

Careers counselling

Summary

REALITIES AND CONSTRAINTS: PATHWAYS FOR FEMALE LEAVERS

Females and the world of work

Leavers at Work

Leavers in Post-secondary Education

Status in Employment

Leavers and the world of non-work

Youth Unemployment

Leavers: special groups

Rural

Aborigines

Summary

PART IV : THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY

SIGNS OF CHANGE

Changing social views

Changing nature of sex roles

Rising aspirations of females

Re-entry to education: more than one chance

Action programs: toward equal treatment of
the sexes

Summary

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK: LEAVERS AT RISK

Strategies for easing the transition

Government Schemes

School Initiatives

Careers Information

Barriers to easy transition

Attitude of employers to school leavers

Transition from school to work: initiatives
by agencies

School and work

Signs of national concern

PART V : CONCLUSION : LEAVERS IN PERSPECTIVE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The emerging picture

General Feature of Potential Early School Leavers

Early Leavers' Perceptions of School

Early Female Leavers

Early Female Leavers in Jobs

Sex-divided Pathways

Effecting change

The Role of Society

The Role of Schools

The Role of Employers

Strategies for change

Identity Construction

Planned Intervention

Challenging Assumptions

Diminishing Sexism

System Feedback

Postscript

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CHAPTER 2

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